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## Exploring Intertextuality: A Study Of A Teacher's Implementation Of The Key Stage 1 Reading SATs

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**ANTHONY PETER LOWNDES**

**Open University Reference Number: L0283860**

**EXPLORING INTERTEXTUALITY: A STUDY OF A TEACHER'S  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KEY STAGE 1 READING SATs**

**Submitted for degree of: DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)**

**Submission date: 25/01/2001**

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## ABSTRACT

### ABSTRACT.

The use of Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) to test six- and seven-year-old children is a contentious feature of the English and Welsh education systems. This study investigated a teacher's implementation of the 1997, 1998 and 1999 Key Stage 1 reading SATs and involved 57 children. 15 SATs were selected for detailed analysis using criteria which aimed to achieve a balance between the grades awarded, girls and boys, year cohorts, and a different reading book for each child. Data was collected from audio-tapes of the SATs, field notes, written records and interviews with the teacher. 15 pupils who took their reading SAT in 1999 were also interviewed.

The selected SATs were transcribed and analysed using discourse analysis. The focal question posed by this study was to discover which were the most salient discourses in a teacher's implementation of the Key Stage 1 reading SATs. The concept of intertextuality was used to examine the relationship between these discourses. Intertextuality was defined as signifying the ways in which discourses are associated in particular contexts and cultures with other discourses (intertexts) through similarities in categorisation, semantics, syntax and genre.

The analysis indicated that five main discourses were present throughout the SATs. These were the teacher's interpretation of the SATs handbook, pedagogical techniques, the pupils' discourse, the reading book, and background and linguistic knowledge. Other situational, institutional and societal factors were pervasive but these tended to act as covert influences upon the main discourses.

The teacher found that some of the instructions in the handbook were confusing and contradictory. Her predominant criterion in awarding grades was the number of errors made by the child when reading a selected passage,

## ABSTRACT

although the handbook appeared ambivalent on this point. The children's enjoyment, enthusiasm and ability to answer questions about the book made little or no difference to the grade they received. It was also found that the pupils' responses had to meet the teacher's criteria for being an appropriate intertext in order to avoid being classified as *incorrect or irrelevant*. Most children appeared to enjoy their reading SAT and, with one possible exception, there was no evidence of any anxiety or reluctance to participate in this formal educational testing procedure.

## DECLARATION

None of the material in this dissertation has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification from any university or educational institution.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my tutor, Charles Sarland, for his patience, encouragement and always pertinent, constructive advice throughout this project. My thanks also to other Open University staff and students who have discussed various aspects of EdD work during residential school and FirstClass conferences. I am indebted to Ms. Bright for her unfailing co-operation throughout the series of interviews and for allowing me full access to the SAT sessions, audiotapes and documents. My thanks also to the head teacher for permission to carry out research in the school. Especially, I would like to thank the pupils for providing me with some fascinating hours of observing and listening to their reading SATs.

## **PART A: INTRODUCTION**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION**

In her article on Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) Rhona Stainthorp commented “SATs, particularly at Key Stage 1, have always been perhaps the most controversial aspect of the recent curriculum reforms” (1997, p.35). Other writers such as Clarke (1991, p.11) have declared that any kind of standard assessment is totally unsuitable for six- and seven-year-old children because they do not understand its purposes or procedures. Yet SATs have become an integral part of the English and Welsh education systems and Abbott et al. (1994, p.13) comment that teachers will have to learn to live with them as “National Curriculum assessment is here to stay and it is important.”

According to Fairclough (1989, p.103), the subject positions occupied by both teacher and pupils are likely to contribute to the continuous process of shaping subjectivities and the positioning of individuals throughout their school careers. The Key Stage 1 SATs are of particular interest because, according to the Teacher’s Handbook, they are intended to be “incorporated into normal classroom procedures and routines as far as possible” (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1997, p.4). Yet for the six- and seven-year-old pupils who are taking the SATs, this is likely to be their first experience of the constraints of the educational testing process. Previously, they have been used to working co-operatively with their teachers and being helped when necessary but the reading SATs are an assessment of individual, unaided performance.

## CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

This project began as an evaluation of the extent to which a teacher was positioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority texts regarding the implementation of SATs. However, it soon became apparent that other discourses also had a significant influence on the ways in which the SATs were carried out and so the focus of the study changed into an investigation of what these discourses were and how they functioned. In order to examine the relationship between these discourses, the concept of intertextuality was employed. Intertextuality signifies the ways in which discourses are associated in particular contexts and cultures with other discourses (intertexts) through similarities in categorisation, semantics, syntax and genre. The advantage of using such a comprehensive definition is that it allows a wide variety of intertexts and approaches to be included in the discussion. The disadvantage of being inclusive is that an infinite number of intertexts are theoretically possible.

In 1992 Kamberelis and Scott suggested a research agenda for investigating intertextuality in educational settings. They believed that “what remains relatively unexplored...are the specific ways in which texts and textual practices are juxtaposed and interwoven in mutually affirming or contentious ways” (1992, p. 364). They argued that one of the major tasks of discourse analysis was to investigate how, when and why particular intertextual connections are made (ibid., p.367). Such an analysis would indicate the borders of particular discourses and the ways in which they are woven together (ibid., p.367).

In the following year, Bloome and Egan-Robertson wrote that “we know of no comprehensive review of intertextuality” (1993, p.305). In their search of the literature, they found a considerable number of articles with “intertextuality” in the title but nearly all of these related to literary rather than empirical studies (ibid., p.306). They concluded that “there have been few published classroom-based (K-12) studies employing the term” (1993, p.307, authors’ parentheses).

Over the last few years there appears to be a growing interest in investigating intertextuality in educational settings, although the number of published articles is still relatively small and of these some are concerned only with pupil-pupil interactions (e.g. Floriani, 1994) or mainly with written intertextuality (e.g. Beach and Anson, 1992). At present there are still only a few published studies such as those of Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993), Maclean (1994) and Harris and Trezise (1997) which have investigated teacher-pupil intertextuality involving both spoken and printed discourses with young children. This study aims to investigate this under-researched area and then consider what implications a greater understanding of intertextuality in classroom discourses would have for professional practice and policy in education.

### CHAPTER 2

#### OVERALL AIMS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

It could be argued that attempting to produce an empirical study of even one person's intertextuality presents an insuperable problem as it will never be possible to trace the roots of all that person's utterances in an event such as a reading SAT. Whilst it is true that the origins of many texts are concealed within the culture, norms and beliefs of both the individual speaker and her/his social groups, this does not mean that their form is completely incomprehensible. Describing and interpreting intertextuality can be compared to describing and interpreting context. No researcher, whether conducting a laboratory experiment or an ethnographic study, can describe and interpret the context in complete detail. All s/he can do is to furnish readers with what appear to be the most salient aspects, whilst bearing in mind that these will always be limited by the time and space available. In a similar fashion, this study does not claim to provide an exhaustive account of a teacher's intertextuality but one in which the most important influences are described and analysed.

Bakhtin (1981, pp.271-2) believes that discourse is inherently unstable due to the centripetal and centrifugal forces which promote both homogeneous and heterogeneous elements. There is never a moment at which meanings begin nor a time when they will be completed but only the "infinite and unfinalized dialogue in which no meaning dies" (Bakhtin, 1986, p169). Similarly, Foucault (1981, p.55) argues that discourses are constantly adapting to meet changes in societal norms and expectations. Therefore, if change is the norm, stability is the factor which needs to be explained.

In order to investigate the effects of time, this project compared a teacher's discourse during the reading SATs carried out in 1997, 1998 and 1999. If certain factors remain unchanged then this may be due to dominant intertexts such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority instructions retaining their power. Changes may occur as the teacher negotiates between prevalent



## CHAPTER 2: OVERALL AIMS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

discourses. They may also be due to differences in contextual features as “context” literally means “accompanying text” and is an essential aspect of intertextual referencing (Hartman, 1992, p.301.) Therefore, both stability and change may provide clues as to the most salient influences on the teacher’s discourse.

The longitudinal aspect of this research project helps to emphasize that intertextuality is a process rather than a product. The teacher’s intertexts are being constantly reconstituted as she reacts to the differing influences provided by other discourses. There is a temptation to regard positioning by discourses as an invariant procedure, placing individuals in fixed subject positions. Yet a more accurate description may be of dominating discourses attempting, but never fully succeeding, in positioning individuals who manage to achieve varying degrees of autonomy in differing contexts (Mills, 1997, p.96).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.24) believe that research should begin with a ‘foreshadowed problem’, that is, a general question which will act as a starting point for an investigation. The foreshadowed problem in this study is:

“Which are the most salient discourses in a teacher’s implementation of the Key Stage 1 Standard Assessment Tasks for reading?”

Some subsidiary questions include:

- (i) How does a teacher work within these discourses to carry out the reading tasks?
- (ii) How do these discourses interact?
- (iii) What influences do these discourses have upon the pupils?
- (iv) What contextual features are likely to affect these discourses?
- (v) What aspects of these discourses have changed and what have remained

constant over the period of the study?

- (vi) What are the implications of these discourses for professional practice and policy in education?

# CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

## PART B: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

### CHAPTER 3

#### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Although discourse about the way texts influence other texts is as old as recorded history (Still and Worton, 1990, p.2), the first systematic attempts to describe and analyse intertextuality are usually credited to Mikhail Bakhtin who began his work in the 1920s (Allen, 2000, p.10; Fairclough, 1992a, p.101; Lemke, 1995, pp.22-25). However, Bakhtin himself never used this term which was coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s (Kristeva, 1986, p.37). This highlights one of the problems in describing intertextuality because different authors use alternative terms to describe phenomena which are similar yet include distinctions of substance or emphasis, such as *double-voiced discourse* (Bakhtin, 1984, p.185), *representation* (Frow, 1990, p.46), *transposition* (Kristeva, 1986, p.111) and *interdiscursivity* (Fairclough, 1992b, p.271). Even when writers employ the term *intertextuality* there may be considerable variation in their interpretations as Lemke (1995, p.10) regards it as a social semiotic device, Harpold (1990, p.7) sees it in terms of hypertextual links, Hand (1990, p.82) perceives it in relation to psychoanalytic concepts whilst Downey (1994, p.3) views it as a tool for literary criticism.

The emphasis in this paper will be to discuss intertextuality as it relates to pupil-teacher interactions in the Key Stage 1 reading SATs. Therefore, whilst the literary and hypertextual associations may provide useful insights, the emphasis will be on its use in an educational setting. Yet this concentration on the institutional and contextual aspects of intertextuality does not mean that its societal implications can be ignored. Volosinov maintains that:

### **CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

The immediate social situation and its immediate social participants determine the “occasional” form and style of an utterance. The deeper layers of its structure are determined by more sustained and more basic social connections. (1986, p.87, author’s quotation marks)

If Volosinov is correct, then the utterances of any individual will always be mediated by societal influences. Although categorisation may result from analytic procedures, in actual usage societal, institutional and contextual factors are inextricably interconnected.

### CHAPTER 4

#### INTERTEXTUAL PROCESSES

Fairclough (1992b, p. 271) believes that it is important to distinguish between *manifest intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. In manifest intertextuality the intertexts are marked by features on the surface of the text and their origins can be traced. An example of this would be in academic literature where quotations from other texts are indicated by quotation marks and explicit reference is made to the source. Yet even manifest intertextuality transforms rather than merely reproduces the original texts as they are placed into different contexts, which may result in differing interpretations. Bakhtin maintains that “an utterance...can never be repeated: it is always a new utterance (even if it is a quotation)” (1986, p.108, author’s parentheses).

Fairclough (1992b, p.271) contrasts manifest intertextuality with interdiscursivity which he describes as the general configuration of discourse conventions such as genre, style, lexical terms and unattributable references which all combine to produce a text. Interdiscursivity refers to an abstract text type and comprises a pattern of language use rather than a particular example of it (Ivanic, 1998, p.48). Whereas manifest intertextuality is an optional characteristic, interdiscursivity is present in all texts.

The range of discourses known to a person can be described as her/his *intertextual resources*. Kress (1989, p.12) believes that access to the set of discourses in a society is determined by an individual’s unique discursive history combined with their social position. Intertextual resources are not equally or randomly distributed and Ivanic (1998, p.53) maintains that because of differences in education, opportunities for employment, and social networks some people will have greater access to privileged discourses than others. Corson (1993, p.12) describes as “the lexical bar”, the high status discourse whose possession confers sociocultural prestige on those who know how and when to use it. Entwistle (cited in Buckingham, 1994, p.32)

believes that children from subordinate classes need to be given greater opportunities to learn valued discourses if society is to become more egalitarian.

Yet knowledge of academically valued discourses does not mean that pupils can or will employ them when they wish to do so, for there are constraints which limit their use. Foucault (1981, pp. 54-55) argues that knowledge is linked to forms of control because institutions have the power to establish what counts as valued knowledge within their own spheres. This works on a principle of exclusion so that certain discourses are considered to be incorrect, inappropriate or irrelevant. Educational institutions have their own practices to reinforce their own interpretations of truth but these are concealed because any discourses which might challenge them are excluded from the system (ibid., p.55). Foucault (ibid., p.56) also believes that most utterances are, to some extent, repetitive and governed by societal norms and by the types of discourse in which people habitually engage. These limit the potentially infinite number of intertexts which could arise, as one text can theoretically be linked to any other text. Fairclough's analysis is concerned with who benefits from these constraints and he argues that:

The theory of intertextuality cannot itself account for these social limitations, and so it needs to be combined with a theory of power relations and how they shape (and are shaped by) social structures and practices. (1992b, pp.270-271, author's parentheses)

Fairclough uses the term 'intertextuality' to refer to both manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity "when the distinction is not at issue" but differentiates between these terms when this is useful for analytical purposes (Fairclough, 1992b, pp. 271-2). As indicated in Chapter 1, this paper also uses *intertextuality* as a general term for links between texts or between parts of a text but employs more specific terms when necessary.

Although categories such as manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity are useful when conducting discourse analysis, dichotomies may be too simplistic to represent meanings adequately. Usher (1996, p.130) believes that dualities such as subject/object, masculinity/femininity and reason/emotion fail to convey the complexity of the topics and emphasise differences rather than similarities. She argues that most dichotomies should be reconstructed as continuities as this would present a more valid perspective of socially-mediated experiences. In discourse analysis, it is easy to envisage considerable disagreement between analysts over how explicit the reference would need to be for an utterance to be classified as manifest intertextuality rather than interdiscursivity. An example of this would be when a teacher summarises the pupils' utterances and reformulates them in a "revised, tidied-up version" (Mercer, 1995, p.32) so as to make them more congruent with the point of the lesson. The source is manifest in that it is based upon the pupils' utterances but interdiscursive in that teachers frequently use the genre, style and lexical terms typical of academic discourse (Kress, 1989, p.6) which are based on unattributable references to other texts.

It can also be difficult to distinguish between manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity unless the analyst is extremely familiar with the speaker's previous experience of discourses (Ivanic, 1998, p.49). Even then only tentative attributions can be made as it is difficult to recognise the origins of one's own utterances and an even more daunting task to retrace those of another person. Therefore caution and a considerable body of evidence are needed before any conclusions can be drawn regarding the source of intertextual references. (This issue is discussed further in Chapter 16).

Ivanic (1998, pp.47-48) believes that the distinction between manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity is a useful one as it differentiates specific texts from abstract text types. However, she argues that Fairclough's term "manifest intertextuality" is misleading because it suggests that source texts will be evident in the new text and suggests *actual intertextuality* would be a

## CHAPTER 4: INTERTEXTUAL PROCESSES

better term as it indicates a link to a specific rather than a general text. Yet it could be argued that "actual intertextuality" is also infelicitous as it appears to imply the existence of an oxymoronic non-actual intertextuality. Frow (1990, p.46) uses the terms *representation* and *trace* in a similar manner to Fairclough's 'manifest intertextuality' and 'interdiscursivity'. The problem with Frow's terms are that 'trace' suggests that this form of intertextuality is less substantial than 'representation', whilst the latter term seems equally applicable to both specific and general sources.

Bakhtin would not have been surprised at the difficulties which beset Fairclough, Ivanic and Frow in their attempts to construct adequate terminology. "Language... is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.294). Rather than attempting to add further terms which would inevitably contain inappropriate connotations, this paper will adopt Fairclough's terminology on the grounds that his work is widely known and *interdiscursivity* is a felicitous term because it is based on the connections between discourses (Ivanic, 1998, p.48).

A useful model for developing an understanding of intertextuality is Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) concept of dialogism, an essential feature of which is that nothing can exist by itself but must always have a relationship to something else. This means that every word, utterance or discourse must be linked in some way to other words, utterances or discourses. A dialogic view of the world means that everything can be understood only as part of a greater whole but as its elements are dynamic, then any understanding of them must be ephemeral and relative to the particular context from which they are viewed (Holquist, 1990, p.426). Still and Worton (1990, p.2) also maintain that no text can exist as a self-sufficient whole or as a closed system. This is due both to the writer's knowledge of other texts which influence her/his own production and all the texts a reader uses to interpret the original text. A discourse produces meaning only through its relationships



## CHAPTER 4: INTERTEXTUAL PROCESSES

with other discourses (Macdonell, 1986, p.3) and all utterances are to some extent agreements or disagreements with other utterances (Volosinov, 1986, p.80).

A result of the inevitability of dialogic relationships is the *addressivity* of any utterance, that is, it must always be directed towards someone (Bakhtin, 1986, p.85). The addressee may be the other interlocutor(s) in face to face conversations or an unknown audience such as newspaper readers or Internet 'chat' groups. Kress (1989, p.14) maintains that even when a person is writing alone the text is a result of dialogue with "an imagined other interactant" who holds opposing views. Bakhtin's (1981, p.280) key point is that every utterance anticipates an answer and that this expectation influences its form. Therefore, any utterance is shaped by its producer and by its audience and so for Bakhtin discourse lies in the intersection between self and other (1986, p.89).

The concept of addressivity means that interpretations can never be final as every utterance is a response to other utterances and will elicit further responses (Allen, 2000, p.28). For Bakhtin (1995, p.149) the dictionary definition of a word is just one meaning amongst many, as utterances can only be interpreted in the specific contexts in which they occur. The interpretation must include consideration of temporal and spatial factors such as the utterances with which they are juxtaposed. Kristeva maintains that the sign "does not refer to a single unique reality, but *evokes* a collection of associated images and ideas" (Kristeva, 1986, p.72, author's italicisation.). Volosinov (1986, p.23) argues that the meaning of the sign is unstable because it constitutes an arena of class struggle whilst Barthes (1994, pp.169-170) believes that the multiplicity of discourses which readers use to interpret a text means that it can never have a unique meaning.

This may suggest that the interpretation of utterances are mutable and so almost anything can serve as an intertext providing one is prepared to engage in vigorous deconstruction. Yet Bakhtin manages to avoid positing the

## CHAPTER 4: INTERTEXTUAL PROCESSES

Tower of Babel situation which would arise if people habitually indulged in *deconstructing utterances rather than adopting the most likely meaning for the specific context and culture* (see Greene, 1986, p.33). Even in his (1984, pp.122-137) celebration of carnival in which the usual discourse patterns are overturned, polyphony is not random and unpredictable but its occurrence is dependent on the particular time and context.

Bakhtin argues that dialogue is a manifold phenomenon but can be reduced to a *minimum of three factors: the utterance, the reply, and the relationship between them* (Holquist, 1990, p.38). This relationship is essential for without it, the utterance and the reply would have no meaning. Still and Worton (1990, p.2) believe that if a writer makes an allusion to a text which is unknown or unnoticed by the reader then this will have a “dormant existence” in her/his reading. Conversely, readers may create meaning by using texts which the writer may not have anticipated. Therefore, *intertextuality cannot lie exclusively in the reader or the writer or in the text but must lie somewhere in the intersection between them.*

Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) arguments that discourses are necessarily ambivalent because they both absorb and respond to other discourses is developed by Kristeva (1986, p.40). She critiques Saussure's concept of the vertical, hierarchical division between the signifier and the signified and suggests a three dimensional model with the horizontal axis being a continuum of meaning between writer and addressee, and the vertical axis towards a previous or future discourse (ibid., p.36). According to Kristeva, meaning is not a fixed point between these axes but is a dynamic relation between author, reader, text, and intertext.

Kristeva's work on intertextuality extends Bakhtin's theorising on subjectivity as Bakhtin's notions of an author and the human subject are more traditional than the postmodernist approach (Vice, 1997, p.3). Kristeva argues that “any text is constructed as a *mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality*

## CHAPTER 4: INTERTEXTUAL PROCESSES

replaces that of subjectivity..."(1986, p.37, author's italicization). According to poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, traditional notions of the individual, the mind and personality are socially constructed in particular historical circumstances and our sense of self is the result of the various discourses we have experienced (Lemke, 1995, Chapter 5). Kamberelis and Scott believe that "self is text under continual revision" (1992, p.399) and subjectivity results from the alignment of individuals with the discourses of influential groups.

Fairclough (1992a, p.102) adapts Kristeva's ideas concerning the way texts rework previous texts and try to anticipate future ones by setting them within a Foucauldian framework which places greater stress on contextual influences (Mills, 1997, p.154). Fairclough (1992a, p.102) explicitly links intertextuality with Gramsci's theories of hegemony and if these are correct, then the discursive constitution of subjectivities is likely to reflect the interests of the dominant groups in society.

The argument that ideologies are effected through discourse is essentially a structuralist concept (Shilling, 1992, pp.3-4). Fairclough's attempts to link it with post-structuralist ideas such as "intertextuality is the source of much of the ambivalence of texts" (1992a, p.105) appears problematic because if texts are ambivalent then their effects are likely to be unpredictable. Kristeva (1986, p.30) argues that the semiotic aspects of discourse comprise a fundamentally heterogeneous process rather than the homogeneous product implied by structuralist theories such as "mechanistic Marxism" (ibid., p.32). MacLure (1994, p.5) describes Fairclough's attempts to integrate the theories of Foucault and Gramsci as "unconvincing" because, contra Foucault, Fairclough maintains that ideology can be described in language which is not itself ideological and that human beings "are capable of transcending ideology" (1992a, p.91). The notion that people may be subject to false consciousness implies that there must be a consciousness which is not false. This is contrary to Foucault's notion of truth as a concept which results from discourses and resides solely within them (Mills, 1997, p.33).

Foucault is also concerned with the inherent ambivalence of texts as they can never be interpreted neutrally but their meaning will always be dependent on the discourses produced by particular historical circumstances. He considers how people's views of sexuality are influenced by the prevailing culture-specific discourses and as these may be contradictory, their meanings are always unstable and their results are unpredictable (Foucault, 1990, p.100). He describes how adult attempts to suppress children's masturbation may have resulted in an increase in this activity because highlighting the practice and imposing severe punishments may have made it appear more attractive (*ibid.*, p.42).

Foucault's contribution to the theory of intertextuality can be contrasted with macro theories such as the neo-Marxist which tend to regard the ideological effects of certain discourses as being both predictable and necessarily insidious. From this viewpoint, it would be possible to analyse classroom discourses and 'read off' their underlying ideologies in terms of how they disadvantage certain groups (see Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Sharp and Green, 1975). Yet if the effects of discourse are unpredictable they may confer benefits as well as disadvantages. Mills (1997, p.88) believes that if engaging in discourse is regarded as an active process, then people interact with power rather than having it imposed upon them and so manage to achieve a certain amount of power for themselves. Foucault (1990, p.101) argues that whilst discourses can produce and sustain power, they may also undermine it and expose its weaknesses.

One of the problems with the Foucauldian, postmodernist and deconstructivist approaches is that insufficient efforts may be made to combat the hegemonic discourses which maintain social inequalities (Skeggs, 1991, p.4; Cole and Hill, 1995, p.5). Whilst their effects may be uncertain, there is substantial evidence to suggest that discourses contain underlying ideologies and one of the aims of the critical linguistics approach is to make these covert meanings manifest (Kress, 1996, p.15). Therefore, Fairclough's

## **CHAPTER 4: INTERTEXTUAL PROCESSES**

(1992a, pp.102-103) emphasis on the links between intertextuality and ideology deserves serious consideration and this will be discussed in the following chapters.

### CHAPTER 5

#### THE SOCIAL NATURE OF UTTERANCES

A Bakhtinian concept which is relevant to both ideology and intertextuality is that of *double-voiced discourse* which occurs when the words and ideas of others are introduced into our own speech (Bakhtin, 1984, p.185). It is never entirely our own yet never an exact rendering of what someone has said before because variants of language, style, dialect and register merge within a single utterance. Our utterances can never be entirely original because we are obliged to use a language which has been shaped by others and words are never neutral but contain cultural ideas, beliefs and values. Gee's (1999, pp.58-61) discussion of the word *bachelor* indicates that words often function as cultural models which both describe and form part of the process of inculcating cultural norms, assumptions and expectations. Also, following Bakhtin's (1986, p.91) argument that words can never exist by themselves but only in relation to other concepts, then *bachelor* must be considered in relation to words such as *spinster*, *married*, *gay*, *single* and *independent*, all of which carry their own connotations and stereotypes. Meaning is situated in particular social practices but this is often overlooked because people are so familiar with their own culture that they accept it as inevitable that certain concepts should be linked together (Gee, 1999, p.63). Fairclough (1992b, p.288-9) describes the ways in texts are transformed into other texts in regular and predictable ways as *intertextual chains* and believes that this forms part of the process of reproducing ideologies.

Closely connected to consideration of the extent to which utterances can be described as 'double-voiced' is what Bakhtin (1984, pp.186-204) and Volosinov (1986, pp.133-140) describe as *direct* and *indirect speech* and Fairclough (1992a, pp.118-120) terms *discourse representation*. This refers to the extent to which the words of another are expressed verbatim or paraphrased in one's own utterances. Using the words of another in direct

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speech may serve such functions as adding an authoritative voice to what is said or distancing oneself from it by using quotation marks (ibid., pp.119-120). The ways in which the utterances are repeated or transformed will inevitably include an interpretation and evaluation upon what is said, as these are essential aspects of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.340-2).

Volosinov, with whom Bakhtin appears to have collaborated closely (see Holquist, 1990, p.8; Dentith, 1995, pp.8-10; Matejka and Titunik, 1986, pp.ix-xi), was particularly interested in the interaction between a “reported voice” (direct quotation) and a “reporting voice” (indirect quotation). He did not regard these terms as dichotomous as he also used categories such as “quasi-direct” and “quasi-indirect” (Volosinov, 1986, p141-159). He claims that the meaning of represented discourse cannot be determined without consideration of how it functions and is contextualised in the representing discourse. Each reported utterance may itself be a reporting utterance because what is being said is likely to be a synthesis or paraphrase of what has been heard previously. This leads Volosinov (ibid., p.96) to conclude that an utterance as a unit cannot be “isolated from the historical stream of utterances” as it merely constitutes one part of a greater whole “which knows neither beginning nor end”.

This greater whole is characterised by variety rather than uniformity. According to Bakhtin (1981, 271-272) one of the reasons why discourses lack stability is that they are the result of a ceaseless conflict between centripetal and centrifugal forces. The centrifugal forces are located in communities which are tolerant of variety in discourse and so diversify language. These are in contrast to the ‘official’ centripetal discourses of the state as expressed through institutions such as the education system which seek to narrow and standardise language (Corson, 1993, pp.12-14). This suggests that the influence of discourses will fluctuate as they compete with others and raises the question of why some discourses gain ascendancy in particular times and places. Fairclough argues that:

...what happens in schools can be decisive in determining whether existing orders of discourse, as well as more generally existing relations of power, are to be reproduced or transformed. (1989, p.244)

If Fairclough is correct, then it should be possible to identify some of the intertextual sources which assist in this domination and others which may work against it.

Hegemony, which was discussed in the previous chapter, is the result of domination by one class over another through the control of cultural forms and the major institutions (Jary and Jary, 1995, p.279). One of the ways in which this is achieved is for the dominant class to define what can be considered as 'truth'. Bakhtin maintains that *authoritative discourse* seeks to dominate or integrate all other discourses and "demands our unconditional allegiance" (1981, pp. 343-344). It is monologic because it is based on the assumption that meaning is fixed and insists that it alone can convey truth. Bakhtin's notion of discourse as a struggle between competing socio-ideological languages means that truth is not a concept which can transcend discourse (Vice, 1997, p.4). Foucault (1984, pp.72-75) also believes that truth is a product of discourse and lies within the social, economic and cultural hegemonies which operate in particular societies at particular times.

Authoritative discourse is produced by people in powerful positions and retains its authority only as long as they remain influential. This does not mean that hearers and readers will necessarily agree with what is said and they may actively resist it but authoritative discourse attempts to stifle creative interpretations. It presents some intertexts as obvious and inevitable whilst excluding others. A prime example of an authoritative voice, and one which may have influenced Bakhtin, was the way in which many of Stalin's speeches were reported verbatim in the Soviet press so that the reporting voice was virtually absent (Wertsch, 1991, pp. 82-3). This is consistent with



Bakhtin's view that "authoritative discourse can not be represented - it is only transmitted" (1981, p.344). Beach and Anson (1992, p.339) believe that certain forms of pedagogy can act in the manner of authoritative discourse because the teacher is in possession of the 'correct', indisputable version of the facts and the students are expected to learn them in this form.

According to Bakhtin (1981, p.346), whilst authoritative discourse can enter our consciousness only in an unchanged form, *internally persuasive discourse* lends itself to transformation as it is essentially dialogic. He believes that the semantic structure of internally persuasive discourse is open to new interpretations because of its "unfinishedness and the inexhaustibility of our further dialogic interaction with it" (ibid.). It begins as the words of another and then competes with an individual's internalised notions and the fusion creates new concepts (Dentith, 1995, p.57).

Davis (1990, p.5) believes that Bakhtin's categories of monologic and dialogic are too broad and that through the use of unquestioning assertions, Bakhtin "maintains a steadfast monologic perspective from which he views the dialogicity of things" (ibid., p.1). Still and Worton claim that Bakhtin's theories contain "slippage between *is* and *ought*" (1990, p.20, authors' italicization) and that when Bakhtin (1981, p.399) suggests there are differences between poetry and novels in terms of monologic and dialogic language he confounds what he believes to be appropriate with what actually exists. Vice (1997, p.3) maintains that Bakhtin's use of central concepts shifts according to context. His (1981, p.344) argument that "authoritative discourse...is incapable of being double-voiced" is incompatible with all discourse being dialogic. He (ibid., p. 343) cites foreign language religious texts as an example of an authoritative discourse yet Vice (1997, pp.27-40) provides an extended example of how Biblical Hebrew is used dialogically in an American novel. These critiques suggest that despite the enormous influence of Bakhtin's work, some of his main concepts are expressed in vague terms and contain contradictory notions.

The concepts of authoritarian and internally persuasive discourse may help to explain both stability and change in discourse. Frow (1990, p.52) points out that a fundamental problem with theories which are based on conflictory relationships is how to account for the structure of any particular discourse. Authoritarian discourse can be regarded as an attempt to limit the range of discourses which are drawn upon and so maintains the status quo whilst internally persuasive discourse may encourage individuals to challenge existing notions of correctness by using alternative discourses. Fairclough (1992c, p.54) believes that using languages and dialects which are normally considered inappropriate can lead to the “reshaping of the sociolinguistic order” and a revision of what is considered appropriate in spheres such as education.

Bakhtin’s concepts of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse are useful for analytic purposes, particularly if they are regarded as being from the point of view of the producer’s intentions. People may intend to produce texts which are unambiguous but whether readers and listeners actually interpret them in this manner is problematic. Meinhof points out that the producer’s preferred reading is only one amongst many possible interpretations and “no audience is just a receptacle for a given set of messages” (1994, p.221). Bakhtin’s own examples (1981, p.343) of authoritative texts included political, religious and moral texts but it is debatable whether any text can be assumed to have only a limited number of meanings. The interpretation of a political speech may depend upon the newspaper in which it is reported (Fowler, 1991, pp.135-145) and political, religious and moral texts have been the subject of polemics for thousands of years. This suggests that a text can only be described as authoritative if the producer’s interpretation alone is taken into account yet meaning appears to lie in the interaction between the speaker, the hearer, the text, and the context (see previous chapter).

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Bakhtin's concept of authoritative discourse as one which "permits no play with the context framing it" (1981, p.343) is incompatible with his argument elsewhere (1986, p.88) that "speech communication is always individual and contextual in nature." If the latter concept is correct, then a text could be described as having the potential to be 'authoritative' in some circumstances whilst in others it may foster multiple readings. Wertsch (1991, p.79) suggests that these concepts should be thought of as existing in a kind of dynamic tension between the authoritative meaning given to words by societal usage and the attempts of individuals to impose their own meanings upon them. Bakhtin (1986, p.89) describes this process as the *assimilation* of the language of others which is replete with their ideas and evaluations which speakers strive to convert into their own speech.

Wertsch believes that rather than referring to individual agents it would be more appropriate to describe them as "individual(s)-acting-with-mediational-means" (1991, p.12, author's parentheses). This would emphasize that individuals must necessarily use socially derived mediational means, such as tools and signs, in order to accomplish anything and individuals can never act outside the sphere of social influence (Vygotsky, 1994, pp.47-48). Wertsch (1991, Chapter 5) also links Vygotsky's view of the social nature of cognitive development to intertextuality by using the metaphor of a tool kit. Different discourses are regarded as 'mediational means' or tools, and an individual has to choose an appropriate one for each occasion. Although Wertsch recognises that people have differential access to these resources he does not give sufficient consideration as to why this access is unequally distributed (Ivanic, 1998, p.53).

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is consistent with Vygotsky's (1994, p.46-47) belief that intermental functioning precedes intramental functioning as an individual's cognitive growth does not occur simply due to maturation processes but is a result of social encounters. Like Vygotsky, Bakhtin (1986, p.92) also maintains that language and thought are created and shaped through interaction and struggle with the thoughts of others. Freedman

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(1995, p.89) argues that although Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's theories have considerable potential they need to be elaborated before they can become useful guides for classroom practice. In particular, she (ibid., p.90) found that social interaction cannot be classified as either present or absent but the degree of involvement of all the participants is likely to have a considerable effect upon any learning which occurs.

Following Vygotsky, Ivancic believes that most intermental encounters are intertextual in that people absorb information from each other's discourses and this creates the possibility of cognitive growth for one or both participants (1998, p.51). She rejects Vygotsky's notion of a simple progression from lower- to higher-order mental functioning but agrees that cognitive growth derives from social life (ibid., p.53). The 'scaffolding' process, which was developed by Bruner using ideas from Vygotsky (Mercer, 1994, p.96) involves the child working with a more experienced partner, usually a teacher or a parent, in order to reach an understanding which s/he would not have achieved unassisted. Ivancic maintains that development can occur through intermental contacts without necessarily assuming that one participant has greater knowledge or power than the other. Research into peer scaffolding amongst children would appear to support this view as Fisher (1994, pp.172-3) found that children were able to assist each other to reach higher levels of attainment, providing that the interactions were based on challenging, modifying and developing the ideas of other children. This emphasises the ways in which our mental processes and discourses are shaped by other members of our social groups and so are inevitably shaped by ideologies.

### CHAPTER 6

#### GENRE, AGENCY AND AUTHORSHIP

Bakhtin (1981, p.291) argues that languages are not monolithic entities but consist of *heteroglossia* which he describes as the *social languages* of different ethnic groups, social classes, occupations, localities and age groups. A social language is specific to a particular group at a particular time and in a particular culture. Examples of social languages would include the discourse of fishing communities, street gangs, the legal profession and speakers of local dialects (see Holmes, 1992; Trudgill, 1974). These are not found in unadulterated forms but represent an intermingling of various types. Speakers often switch between social languages both between and during utterances, for reasons such as to establish solidarity with their interlocutors and in order to facilitate understanding (Holmes, 1992, pp.41-53). Dialogism explains the ways discourses interact whilst heteroglossia describes the discourses themselves (Vice, 1997, pp.20-21).

Bakhtin (1981, pp.288-289) distinguishes between social languages and *speech genres* and describes the latter as relatively stable types of utterances which are used in particular social spheres (1986, p.60). Genres correspond closely to types of social practice (Fairclough, 1992a, p.125) and these include such things as the genres of news broadcasts (Graddol, 1994, p.147; Meinhof, 1994, p.215), horse racing commentaries (Holmes, 1992, pp.280-1) and classroom interaction (Kress, 1989, pp.23-25).

What Bakhtin terms 'social languages and speech genres', Fairclough refers to as *discourse types* (Ivanic, 1998, p.49) which include genre, style, register and the language of specific groups and situations (Fairclough, 1992a, p.124). A genre implies not only a conventional form of text (Graddol, 1994, p.46) but also the processes of producing and consuming texts (Fairclough, 1992b, p.284-5). Genres are shaped by institutionally defined purposes and

have certain roles and social relationships associated with them (Ivanic, 1998, p.46). Both Fairclough and Bakhtin stress that these are abstract 'voices' which exist in the culture rather than being derived from specific utterances. Whilst speech genres are impersonal, words are obtained from the utterances of specific others which give them a personal quality (Bakhtin, 1986, p.88).

Although social languages and speech genres can be differentiated for analytic purposes, in practice they may be interdependent as some genres are found only in particular social languages. Only qualified practitioners are legally empowered to carry out certain types of medical examinations in the British National Health Service and this genre typically involves an asymmetrical dialogue in which the doctor controls the topic and is allowed to ask the patient intimate questions (Fairclough, 1992a, pp.138-144). The social language used in these consultations tends to be based on medical 'facts' and terminology and the patient's attempts at diagnosis using non-medical terms may be dismissed as inferior or even irrelevant when compared to the doctor's conclusions (Tannen and Wallat, 1999, p.362). Similarly, only teachers would be likely to use genres such as Initiation-Response-Feedback, in which they ask questions when they already know the answers (Edwards and Mercer, 1994, p.190).

When considering which intertexts are used or ignored in a particular discourse, the analysis should take into account not only the social language and genre but also whether the interlocutors have equal power in deciding which ones are appropriate. As teachers are a more powerful group than pupils they can dictate the social language, in this case academic discourse, and also the genre, such as that of question and answer sequences. Corson (1993, p.7) argues that whoever decides the context and the language code is empowered whilst those who unquestioningly accept it are disempowered.

Bakhtin does not regard speech genres as frames which automatically shape texts but as tools which are subject to "free creative reformulation" (1986,

p.80). Martin et al. (1994, p.236) also maintain that genres create meaning rather than being “simply a set of formal structures into which meanings are poured”. Even those genres which are relatively stable such as greetings or official statements can be re-accentuated through nuances or intonation (Bakhtin, 1986, p.79). This implies agency and choice, although their extent will always be limited because utterances can only be expressed in language which is socially constructed and so contains the beliefs, expectations and norms of others. A strength of the Bakhtinian view of genre is that it acknowledges the ways in which social practice is constrained by conventions yet also has the potential for change and creativity (Fairclough, 1992b, p.284).

Wertsch (1991, pp. 64-65) argues that social languages and speech genres serve to restrict the meanings that hearers may apply to an utterance. People do not interpret utterances in isolation but take cues from the social languages and genres in which they are embedded. Whilst Bakhtin rejected the notion that words have a universal, decontextualised, literal meaning he also believed that there was a systematicity of interpretation. He maintained that understanding was achieved between speakers and hearers because *genres frame the types of meanings which are likely to be invoked*: “we choose words according to their generic specifications” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 87). In this manner, genres contextualise utterances and so provide cues for their interpretation. Interpreting intertextual references depends upon the hearer recognising both the appropriate genre and also what can be taken as common knowledge (Fairclough, 1989, p.152).

Wertsch (1991, p.135) maintains that classroom discourse is not homogeneous but contains different social languages and speech genres. The variety of classroom discourses is expressed when teachers converse on different subjects and with different students (ibid., p.111). Wertsch believes that much formal schooling for young children comprises covert lessons in how to speak in particular genres and when these genres should, and should not, be used. He refers to this as “mastering patterns of privileging” (ibid.,

p.135), that is, judging which social languages and speech genres are more appropriate than others in a particular sociocultural setting.

Yet if one participant in an interaction has the power to select the genre then the other participant(s) may find that it has been imposed upon them, possibly against their wishes. The issue of agency has important implications for intertextuality. Are people likely to be positioned by texts into accepting ideological concepts as both natural and inevitable, or are they free to make choices? Foucault (cited in Mills, 1997, p.35) questions the notion of an individual self which possesses agency and control, and concentrates his analyses on the processes which constitute subjectivity. Bakhtin (1981, p.293) expounds the dialogic view in which the individual has agency but this is inseparable from societal influences as speech is always populated with the ideas, intentions and beliefs of others.

Davies (1990) conducted an ethnographic study of agency in a primary school classroom and found that agency in discourse is not static but varies considerably both between interactions and within them. Her use of the term "positioning" (ibid., p.19) expresses this dynamic aspect more clearly than Fairclough's term "subject positions" (1989, p.38) which suggests greater stability in power relationships. Davies found that a crucial factor in facilitating agency was the knowledge of alternative discourses as this reduced the likelihood of the dominant discourses being regarded as inevitable. Individual agency is necessarily limited as the freedom of one individual to do something may infringe upon the freedom of another. As agency is usually achieved through discourse it is likely to be a site of struggle over power (see Fairclough, 1989, p.70). This means that agency is perhaps best considered in terms of degrees of freedom allowed by societal, institutional and situational factors rather than an unrestrained ability to do and say whatever what one wishes.

*A further question posed by the work of Bakhtin, Kristeva and Foucault is the extent to which an individual could be described as the 'author' of her/his*



utterances and writings, if all texts are produced from pre-existing intertexts. Barthes (1994, p.168) argues that “the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.” The author merely arranges these in a certain fashion and is unable to dictate their meaning. Allen (2000, pp.199-202) maintains that hypertexts present a manifest form of Barthes’ theories of intertextuality. Hypertext readers can adopt the role of ‘author’ by following links of their own choice rather than those set out for them in linear texts. They may also have the opportunity to contribute to the text by adding their own comments and creating pathways to other texts. This is consistent with Barthes’ belief that the unity of a text is a result of the *reader’s efforts rather than the writer’s* (1994, p.170).

The notion that readers rather than writers are responsible for the meaning of a text, whilst having certain theoretical merits, has practical consequences. Placing responsibility for recognising intertextuality in the reader rather than the writer could result in sexist and racist discourses being condoned on the grounds that the author’s meaning is unknown and irrelevant. However, Bakhtin’s ideas on dialogism may represent a solution to the problems posed by ‘The Death of the Author’ (Barthes, 1994). As things cannot exist by themselves but only in a relationship with something else then the meaning of a text can only be considered in terms of writer, reader, and the relationship between them. This relationship is not fixed but will vary, depending upon historical and contextual circumstances and is always expressed evaluatively.

Ivanic (1998, p.55) believes that what makes a writer’s voice unique is the set of discourses to which s/he has access, combined with the social restrictions which limit choice amongst them. Bakhtin (1986, p.89) regarded intertextuality as a creative process because although “something created is always created out of something given” (ibid., pp.119-120) the emergent discourse is endowed with new values and is never identical to what existed previously. Studies conducted on school children tend to show that they use intertexts creatively and in ways in which teachers could not have anticipated. Sarland (1992) shows how children used a wide variety of

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intertexts when dramatising a story which a teacher had read to them. Much of the humour of this dramatisation depended upon the audience, i.e. the rest of the class, understanding the intertextual references such as television advertisements. This suggests that the ability to combine previous discourses to form new ones may have wide boundaries but that nevertheless boundaries must exist if communication is to be comprehensible. If the children had used intertexts known only to themselves then the normal conventions of discourse, such as Grice's (1999, p.79) co-operative principle of Relation, which includes avoiding obscurity, would have been broken.

Sarland (1991) has also shown that whilst children demonstrate a considerable amount of variety in the intertexts they use to interpret books, they are influenced by societal factors such as gender. These act as a flexible boundaries on the construction of meaning as "differences in gender account both for book choice, and for different *readings* by boys and girls" (ibid., p.118, author's emphasis). Maybin (1994, p.148) also found that although children used previously encountered texts in creative ways both in and out of the classroom, their use was influenced by their interpretation of the social environment. She showed that the children's speech in the classroom varied from that in the playground, dinner queues and toilets. This suggests that contextual features are likely to act as flexible boundaries upon the types of intertexts used by individuals.

### CHAPTER 7

### COHESION

Contextual features comprise not only the physical and social environments in which interactions occur but also the linguistic aspects both within and between discourses. The following sections will discuss cohesion, coherence and background knowledge as their contribution to the interpretation of texts is essential to understanding intertextuality. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this, or possibly any other project, to provide an exhaustive account of the processes by which people interpret utterances, these are some of the most important aspects. A necessary element of successful communication is knowledge of the links between different parts of a text, and also between the text and the context in which it appears (Fowler, 1987, p.62). These links provide continuity and “texture” to a text so that it functions as a unity and can be distinguished from series of randomly juxtaposed utterances (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.2). Consideration of these connections may lead to a greater understanding of the complex, yet taken-for-granted, phenomenon of how people actually manage to communicate with a reasonable degree of mutual comprehension.

One of the main ways in which meaning is ascribed to a text is through cohesion which is concerned with the relationships between linguistic forms at the surface level of discourse (Cook, 1989, p.156). Cohesive ties between parts of a text are semantically based but tend to be realised in particular lexico-grammatical patterns such as prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns and demonstratives. Grammatical and lexical cohesion are interdependent and usually support each other (Hasan, 1994, p.86). They are essential to comprehension because even if hearers understand the meaning of each word and the structure of each clause, if they fail to understand how the cohesive devices operate they are unlikely to comprehend the text as a whole (Cook, 1989, p.127).

The unity of a text is achieved by a combination of structural, semantic, and functional elements (Stubbs, 1983, p.9). Yet whilst cohesion contains all these elements, by itself, it is insufficient for comprehensible discourse:

“The Arctic is cold and frogs croak but she found his wallet.”

In the constructed example above, the conjunctions *and* and *but* and the pronominals *she* and *his* are typical grammatical devices which are used to achieve cohesion. Despite their presence, the utterance as a whole lacks the unity which would make it meaningful. On the other hand, the advertisement below lacks cohesive devices and yet is intended to be easily comprehended by readers.

Figure 7.1: Advertisement in Stafford Chronicle 24/09/99, p.5



This advertisement demonstrates that it is possible to have coherence without cohesion. There appears to be no obvious cohesive grammatical or even semantic links between ‘Simply the Best’, ‘Westside Taxis’ and ‘01785 225588’. It could be argued that as ellipsis can be a form of cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.146) the advertisement could be read as “[We are] simply the best [local taxi firm and our name is] Westside Taxis [and our telephone number is] 01785 225588” (elliptical words in square brackets). Yet this would be stretching ellipsis well beyond the boundaries of what Halliday and Hasan intended, for they state that it should not be used to

describe everything which could be conceivably be included in a text but where there are “specific structural slots to be filled from elsewhere” (ibid., p.143).

As no cohesive ties appear to be present, any cohesion in the mind of the reader must be due to background knowledge. The slogan ‘Simply the Best’ is used as a claim to excellence and may be derived from the title of a chart topping record by Tina Turner. The link between this claim and ‘Westside Taxis’ appears to be based on association through proximity (see Stubbs, 1983, p.93) as no evidence is given to support this claim and no limit is placed upon it, i.e. Is it the best taxi firm in Stafford? In the Midlands? In Britain? In Europe? Advertisements often make comparisons without stating what the product is being compared with (Myers, 1994, p.68), which means that the reader is obliged to use coherence and background knowledge to make sense of the utterance. This frequently occurs in other discourses when vague terms are used to imply comparisons, such as “complexity” in academic texts (ibid.).

In Figure 7.1, background knowledge would also be needed to recognise that the numerals represent a telephone number as taxi firms usually include this in advertisements. Local readers of the newspaper may also be aware that 01785 is the STD code for Stafford. The fact that part of the advertisement is printed in a typeface which resembles handwriting may be due to a desire to add authenticity, in the way in which a signature symbolises that what is written is genuine and truthful. Although discourse analysis tends to concentrate on linguistic signifiers these usually work alongside non-linguistic signifiers such as typeface, tone of voice, facial expressions and eye contact. These are also an important aspect of intertextuality and Graddol (1994, pp.46-48) argues that they could be regarded as ‘texts’.

Meaningful utterances which lack any cohesive markers tend to be very brief as it would be difficult to produce a long, comprehensible text without them (Nunan, 1993, p.64). As will be demonstrated in the following sections,

cohesion, coherence and background knowledge work interactively to provide hearers with cues as to how they can interpret utterances. Readers interpret a text by recognising the context, such as categorising it as belonging to a particular genre, and then identifying the functions each utterance fulfils within it (ibid., pp. 61-62). Once this context has been established, cohesion, coherence and background knowledge bridge the gaps of what has been left unsaid as it is impossible to provide all the potentially relevant information in any utterance, however long and however complex (Shiro, 1994, p.176). In the above advertisement it would be possible to write a long description of taxi firms without being complete in itself, for whatever is said always depends on other facts being taken for granted. This is consistent with Bakhtin's argument that a word cannot exist alone but must always be in a relationship with other words (1986, p.69).

Cohesive devices do not in themselves create relationships in a text but they do make relationships more explicit (Nunan, 1993, p.27). Whilst too few cohesive ties result in texts becoming ambiguous (ibid., pp. 108-111) an overabundance of cohesive links does not necessarily increase a reader's comprehension as competent discourse is inherently inexplicit and context-dependent (Farghal, 1992, pp.2-3). The amount and type of cohesive ties depends upon the nature of the discourse and the relationship between the producer and the receiver (Cook, 1989, p.127). Legal documents tend to have abundant surface cohesive features in order to avoid ambiguity whereas conversations between people who know each other well contain fewer surface features and rely on implicit understandings.

Hasan (1994, pp.77-85) identified three types of cohesive device: *co-reference*, *co-classification* and *co-extension*. In co-reference and co-classification one of the linked terms is usually a grammatical item (ibid., p.83). Grammatical items typically consist of determiners, conjunctions, prepositions and pronouns (Leech, 1992, p.45) and act as "a kind of linguistic glue to connect other words together" (Open University, 1994, p.25). Grammatical items belong to 'closed categories' as each category has

relatively few members and languages are usually resistant to adopting new ones (Gee, 1999, p.100).

*Co-referentiality* is a cohesive device in which both terms refer to an identical item. It is typically realised through pronominals, definite articles or demonstratives. (The following examples of cohesive ties have been constructed for illustrative purposes but actual instances of these categories in pupil-teacher interactions are included in Chapter 22.)

Example: “Helen likes this mug. It was given as a present to her.”

In the above example *Helen* and *her* are co-referential terms because they are both concerned with an identical person whilst *mug* and *It* are also co-referential as they refer to the same item.

*Co-classification* occurs when two or more terms refer to a separate member of an identical class and is normally realised by substitution or ellipsis (Hasan, 1994, p.77).

Example: “John’s tie is blue but Alan’s is brown.”

In this example, *Alan’s* is an elliptical phrase for *Alan’s tie*. This is a different member of an identical class and so the relationship is of co-classification.

Cohesive ties of co-referentiality and co-classification depend upon implicit coding devices (Hasan, 1994, p.78). In the above examples, *it*, *her* and *Alan’s* cannot be interpreted alone but only in conjunction with the object to which they refer.

*Co-extension* occurs when both terms refer to “something within the same general field of meaning” (Hasan, 1994, p.77). The two linked terms are typically lexical items, which include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (El-Shiyab, 1997, p.6). These belong to ‘open categories’ in the sense that the number of members is extremely large and languages readily adopt new ones. Lexical cohesion depends more upon both context and background knowledge than other types of cohesion (Nunan, 1993, p.30). A word which appears to belong to a similar category in one text may be regarded as

irrelevant in another. Therefore, a thesaurus would not necessarily provide a closed set of meanings for lexical items as their relationship, or lack of significant relationship, depends upon the context and the background knowledge of the speaker and the hearer.

Hasan (1984, p.83) admits that “the same general field of meaning” is a vague description and that it is possible to argue that any two terms might have a connection of some kind, albeit a tenuous one. In order to avoid the overuse of co-extension she suggests (ibid., pp.84-85) that it should be limited to instances of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy and repetition. They are of particular importance to intertextuality because these indicate the ways in which people regard certain categories as being obviously linked yet ignore the way in which this is a result of cultural norms rather naturally occurring qualities (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1997, p.5).

In *synonymy*, the meaning of two terms is considered to be very similar, e.g. *handsome* and *good-looking*. However, synonymy is only applicable in particular collocations which have been established through customary practice. Graddol, Cheshire and Swann (1994, p.110) point out that synonymy, or its absence, can indicate conventions which perpetuate social divisions. *Handsome* and *pretty* may not be regarded as synonyms if the former term is generally used for men and the latter for women.

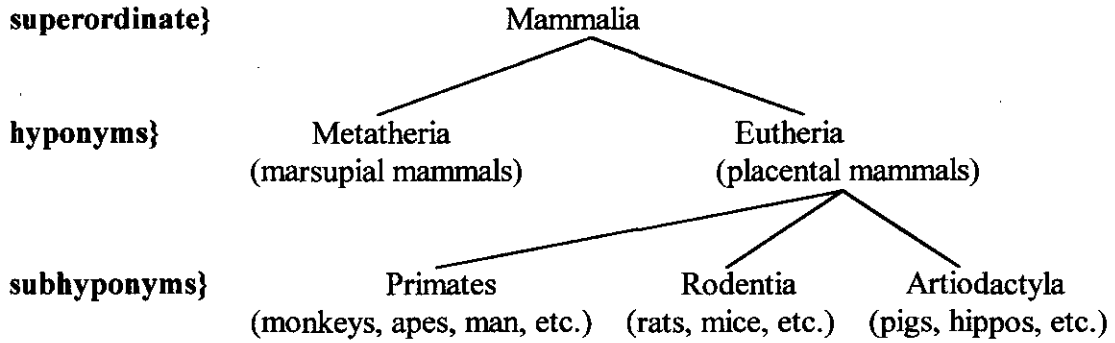
*Antonymy* is the opposite of synonymy in that the words have opposite meanings and, according to the Nuttall Dictionary of English Synonyms and Antonyms (1976, p.301), words such as *wide* and *narrow* are antonyms. Yet in the discourse of cricket, the term a “narrow” does not exist as the opposite of a “wide”, and “a wide escape” is not used to indicate the opposite of “a narrow escape”. This provides support for Volosinov’s (1986, p.95) argument that the meaning of language depends upon the particular situation in which it occurs.



## CHAPTER 7: COHESION

*Hyponymy* is a relationship of inclusion and the elements can be arranged hierarchically (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, p.114).

Figure 7.2: An example of hyponymy, adapted from “The Animal Kingdom” (Collins English Dictionary, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1998, p.1785)



In the above example, which is based on Western zoological classification, man is placed in the same group as monkeys and apes and at the same level in the hierarchy as rats, mice and pigs. For some groups and societies such a classification would be unacceptable for cultural and religious reasons. The ways in which different societies arrange their hierarchies can tell us much about their value systems (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, p.115). Jaworski and Coupland (1999, p.4) maintain that all aspects of experience are based upon classification and that interpretation is mainly a process of defining boundaries between conceptual classes.

Wittgenstein (1967, p.32) describes words which are linked to each other through intermediate stages as having “family resemblances” and argues that any concept is necessarily indistinct because it is defined through blurred boundaries (ibid., pp.33-34). Hasan (1994, p.84) points out that many co-hyponomous relationships are also ones of “weak antonymy” but that differentiating between hyponymy and antonymy may not be of particular importance as they both contribute to cohesion.

*Meronymy*, like hyponymy, is also based on a hierarchical structure but in

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this case refers to a part-whole relationship where the co-meronyms can be combined to form the superordinate.

### An example of meronymy

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>superordinate}</b> | book                                     |
| <b>meronyms}</b>      | pages, covers, printing, index, diagrams |

*Repetition* includes items derived from the same unit although they may be morphologically distinct, e.g. run, runs, running, ran. These need not necessarily refer to the same object or event as cohesion occurs when a similar experiential meaning is created by the repetition of a lexical unit (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, pp.282-284; Hasan, 1994, p.85).

Cohesion can be seen in 'chains' which comprise a series of links that relate items to each other in a text. These syntagmatic chains assist the reader's or hearer's comprehension because they set up expectations that other items will or will not occur within the chain (Stubbs, 1983, p.92). Each chain in a text supports and clarifies the meanings of other chains and this reduces ambiguities (Hasan, 1994, p.87). The comprehensibility of a text depends upon the unbroken interaction between its chains. In well-formed texts no two chains are completely separate but are always linked to each other through intermediate chains (El-Shiyab, 1997, p.7).

Fairclough (1989, p.130) uses the term *cohesive feature* to describe any component which cues a connection between one part of a text and another. Relationships may not always be signalled by overt connectors as mere juxtaposition may imply a relationship (ibid., p.131). However, the tendency of listeners to use chains as clues for understanding can occasionally lead to erroneous assumptions such as when two utterances occur next to each other, hearers will often attempt to relate them even if this was not the

## CHAPTER 7: COHESION

speaker's intention (Stubbs, 1983, p.93). This suggests that in order to achieve an understanding of utterances, people associate cohesion with coherence.

### CHAPTER 8 COHERENCE

Coherence is the quality of meaning, unity and purpose perceived in discourse (Cook, 1989, p.156). Whilst a text is almost always coherent from the writer's point of view, in that s/he had a purpose in using a particular form of words, the perception of coherence in the text is likely to vary from reader to reader (Shiro, 1994, p.176). Some readers may interpret it in ways which are congruous with the writer's intentions, whilst others may find it incoherent. Therefore, coherence cannot be established by merely by investigating the internal grammar of decontextualised texts (Cook, 1989, p.28).

The two main kinds of connections which contribute to coherence are between different parts of the text, and between the text and the reader's background knowledge (Fairclough, 1989, p.78). Links between different parts of the text are often signalled by surface features such as grammatical or lexical cohesive devices, although they may also depend upon implicit assumptions. The connections between the text and background knowledge are usually unstated and will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Whilst coherent discourse is distinguished from random sentences by the presence of text-unifying cohesive devices, cohesion alone is insufficient for the establishment of coherence (Nunan, 1993, pp. 59-61). Coherence can only be understood by considering the perspectives and assumptions of both speakers and hearers. Whilst the distinction between surface and underlying coherence can be useful for analytic purposes, it can also be misleading if it conveys the impression that if there are few explicit clues to coherence then it must be present in underlying assumptions (Gough and Talbot, 1996, p.218). Coherence is not an absolute, complete, logical entity but a process which includes indeterminacy and ambivalence. Interlocutors are usually

satisfied if it “hangs together sufficiently well for present purposes” (Fairclough, 1992a, p.134).

Coherence is an essential aspect of attributing meaning to a text. This cannot be achieved with reference to language alone as it also requires extra-linguistic knowledge (Cook, 1992, p.231). Semantic knowledge is required to interpret the referential meaning of words or utterances but this needs to be supplemented with pragmatic knowledge in order to understand how these should be interpreted in specific contexts (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999, p.14; Cook, 1989, p.29). In order to achieve understanding, listeners must simultaneously perceive both the propositional meaning and the functional intention of the speaker, that is, what the person is saying and why s/he is saying it (Nunan, 1993, p.64).

Bakhtin (quoted in Holquist, 1990, pp.62-63) maintains that utterances always simplify what is being said. As language does not allow the possibility of being totally explicit and so provide all the potentially relevant details, inferences are required to fill the gaps of what has been left unsaid (Gough and Talbot, 1996, p.221). Textual information combines with inferences to form a coherent whole and readers tend to look for a purpose in events and a reason for evaluations even when there are no explicit references in a text (Shiro, 1994, p.167; p.172).

Readers link propositions together by either automatically or consciously making inferences (Fairclough, 1989, p.81). This is usually such an instantaneous process that people are only aware of it when they are faced with a puzzling ambiguity (Greene, 1986, p.25). There is no clear-cut division between implicit and explicit processing of inferences (Shiro, 1994, p.171) and the amount and depth of inferencing that occurs will depend on particular texts and particular readers (Fairclough, 1989, p.81). If inferences were solely a result of readers' interpretations then the content of the text would be of little importance but Bransford et al. (cited in Greene, 1986,

pp.29-30) demonstrated that even small changes in a text produce different kinds of inferences.

Fairclough's (1989, p.81) maintains that texts can position readers so that they use ideologies in order to interpret them and so covertly reproduce these ideologies. The more mechanical the process of 'gap-filling' then the less likely it is that these ideologies will be brought into focal awareness. Over time, this will result in them being taken for granted and so not requiring any evaluation.

A problem with decontextualised utterances is that an almost infinite number of inferences can be drawn from them (Shiro, 1994, p.173). A major obstacle faced by researchers into Artificial Intelligence was to try and limit the number of inferences made by computer programs designed to simulate understanding of human speech (Greene, 1986, p.117). In the early stages of this research, even computer programs with a huge 'memory' took several minutes to interpret utterances which a person could achieve almost instantaneously because the computers had difficulty in deciding which inferences were likely to be appropriate (ibid., p.124). The facility of human processing of inferences appears to be greatly dependent upon contextual clues, particularly links between linguistic and background knowledge (Fairclough, 1992a, p.75; Shiro, 1994, p.173). The genre of the discourse assists coherence by facilitating some links whilst constraining others (Kress, 1989, p.31). When utterances form a unified text, this may help to limit the number of inferences as they complement each other and strengthen the possibility of certain inferences seeming appropriate whilst others seem incongruous (Shiro, 1994, pp.171-173). Fairclough (1992a, p.75) argues that interpreters usually opt for a small set of meanings because they use automatic or taken-for-granted assumptions.

An aspect of pragmatics which has particular salience for the concept of coherence is Grice's (1999) model of communication which is based on the notion of a *Co-operative Principle* in discourse. This principle relies on the

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assumption that interlocutors collaborate in directing their conversation towards a common goal. In order to achieve this, Grice (ibid., pp.78-79) suggests that the hearer should assume that the speaker is following the four maxims of the co-operative principle. These are:

- (a) to be as informative as is required (the maxim of Quantity).
- (b) to be truthful and possess sufficient evidence for what is being asserted (the maxim of Quality).
- (c) to be relevant (the maxim of Relation).
- (d) to be brief and "to avoid obscurity of expression" (the maxim of Manner).

Grice (ibid., p.80) suggests that if interlocutors follow these maxims then meaning can be interpreted as being consistent with the surface features of the utterance. If we ask shop assistants for the price of an item we assume that they will tell us truthfully what it is (the maxim of Quality); they will not tell us the price of every item in the shop (the maxim of Quantity); they will not tell us their family history or choice of lottery numbers (the maxim of Relation); and that they will not engage in a lengthy and obscure account of all the factors which contributed to the price of the item (the maxim of Manner).

Our experience of conversations might suggest that on many occasions one or both of the interlocutors do not adhere to these maxims yet this does not necessarily indicate a lack of shared goals. Grice (ibid., p.77) believes that meaning is derived from two kinds of implicatures. *Conventional implicatures* denote the literal value of words and it can be assumed that the speaker's meaning coincides with what s/he is actually saying. These can be contrasted with *conversational implicatures* which result from a transgression of one or more of the maxims of the co-operative principle and so meaning cannot be derived from the utterance alone. If the shop assistant in the above example told the customer that the price was £20 when she was only expecting to pay £1 and the customer replied "That's a bargain!" we

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would be unlikely to take her words literally. In these circumstances, we might assume that the customer is deliberately violating the maxim of Quality and being sarcastic rather than truthful.

Conversational implicatures can be used to explain most figures of speech which are not intended to be taken literally such as irony, metaphor, hyperbole and even non sequiturs. In Grice's (ibid., p.86) example of a non sequitur, if someone makes an offensive remark at a party and another guest immediately follows this up by a complete change of topic, this would contravene the maxim of Relation in that it is irrelevant to the previous utterance. Yet the purpose of this intervention is to indicate that the offensive remark should not be discussed any further and perhaps also that the other guest has made a social gaffe. Therefore, the goal of this utterance is to restore social harmony. If people appear to contravene the maxims we can make assumptions about their motives for doing so, although we cannot be sure that these assumptions are correct. Grice's work is consistent with the speech act theory of Austin (1999, p.64) who argues that language is used to achieve goals rather than merely providing descriptions of phenomena, situations and events.

Grice's maxims can be thought of as indicating the part inferences can play in discourse rather than providing a complete account. He concedes that his concepts need to be expanded to circumstances where the main purpose of the discourse is not necessarily to achieve "a maximally effective exchange of information" (1999, p.79). His work has been extremely influential in both pragmatics and discourse analysis (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999, p.17). It is compatible with Goffman's (1999) concept of *face* as both theories are based on the belief that many inferences and circumlocutions can be explained by the desire of interlocutors to be polite to each other.

Goffman (1999, p.306) defines *face* as the positive value people claim for themselves and which consists of socially approved attributes. It is



insufficient merely to maintain one's own face in a conversation as people need to assist other interlocutors in maintaining their faces:

The person who can witness another's humiliation and unfeelingly retain a cool countenance himself [*Goffman's generic pronoun*] is said in our society to be 'heartless', just as he who can unfeelingly participate in his own defacement is thought to be 'shameless'. (Goffman, 1999, p.308)

Other, perhaps less altruistic, reasons for helping to maintain the face of our interlocutors are that they may challenge our own face or they may respond aggressively (ibid., p.309).

Both Goffman and Grice argue that most discursal interactions are characterised by an implicit consensus between interlocutors as to how the discourse should be conducted. These ideas can be linked to Malinowski's (1994, pp. 9-10) concept of a ritualistic element in everyday conversations and that language is essentially a tool for achieving goals. These may range from practical actions to phatic communion (social bonding) and Goffman points out these act as guidelines which enable members of a society to be "self-regulating participants in social encounters" (1999, p.319).

The concepts of the 'co-operative principle' and 'face' are based on equality of status between the interlocutors and the extent to which these are applicable when one participant has authority over the other(s), as in pupil-teacher interactions, appears problematic. Nevertheless, both Grice and Goffman have made a considerable contribution to describing the role of inferences in discourse. Analysts must consider the speaker's intentions and realise that these are not always congruent with the overt form of the utterance. From the point of view of intertextuality, this is of critical importance as the underlying discourses drawn upon by the interlocutors may

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differ from the surface discourses. It also emphasizes the need to consider the type and extent of the background knowledge which is shared between interlocutors and used to create coherence in discourse.

### CHAPTER 9

#### BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Although both cohesion and coherence require semantic and syntactic knowledge, in order to understand what is being said these processes need to be supplemented with knowledge of the world (Stubbs, 1983, p.123; Cook, 1992, p.231; Nunan, 1993, p. 64). Tannen and Wallat (1999, p.349) believe that even the literal meaning of an utterance can be understood only by reference to a pattern of prior knowledge because words are always insufficient to convey the full experience of phenomena and events. The converse is also true in that however much background knowledge hearers may possess, they need to understand the grammar and semantic content of an utterance in order to achieve comprehension. A person living in Scotland may have a great deal of background knowledge in common with a person living in Wales but if one speaks in Gaelic and the other in Welsh they are unlikely to achieve mutual comprehension.

The interrelationship between linguistic and background knowledge is indicated in this constructed example:

“Sally bumped into a teacher. She was told to be more careful.”

Although it is unclear who was told to be more careful, readers would probably infer that it was Sally. They would be aware from their knowledge of English syntax that Sally is the agent in the first sentence because it was she who “bumped” and they could combine this with their world knowledge that the person responsible for an accident may expect some form of censure. “She” in the second sentence could theoretically refer to any female, human or animal, but readers’ knowledge of cohesion and coherence is likely to make them infer someone who has been mentioned previously (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.281). The assumption that this person is Sally would be strengthened by their background knowledge that a teacher reprimanding a pupil is a common occurrence which would not normally be thought unusual or requiring much explanation. If the utterance was intended to be

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interpreted as Sally reprimanding the teacher, the reader might reasonably expect to be furnished with further details such as Sally was angry or Sally frequently reprimanded teachers. This additional information would be consistent with Grice's (1999, p.80) maxim of Quantity in that the information provided by a speaker should "be neither more nor less than is required".

The above example suffers from the same limitations as most constructed examples in that it fails to provide any contextual details and ignores the fact that utterances usually form part of a larger text. When people are engaging in discourse they constantly seek textual and contextual clues to confirm or revise what they believe to be the meanings and intentions of others (Tannen and Wallat, 1999, p.349). Any interpretation can only be provisional and is subject to amendment if it appears that alternative intertexts might produce a more satisfactory explanation. Whilst engaging in this process people draw upon a variety of other discourses, both linguistic and extra-linguistic. Linguistic knowledge and world knowledge operate interactively and it is difficult to make a rigid distinction between them (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, p.129).

Whilst Graddol, Cheshire and Swann (ibid., p.128) prefer to use the term *world knowledge*, other authors refer to similar phenomena as *background knowledge* (Nunan, 1993, p.30), *everyday knowledge* (Young, 1992, p.23), *shared knowledge* (Stubbs, 1983, p.1) and *members' resources* (Fairclough, 1989, p.24). Fairclough (1989, p.141-2) believes that the term *background knowledge* is "unduly restrictive" as many of these common sense assumptions are ideological and therefore 'knowledge' is a misleading term. However, Fairclough's argument is over terminology rather than content and it is debatable whether *members' resources* conveys a better description of the social nature of these processes. Therefore, 'background knowledge' will be used in this paper although, as with all other terms, it will inevitably be accompanied by unintended connotations. Nevertheless, it is felicitous in that

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it suggests that the knowledge is in the background and so less likely to be placed under focal attention.

As both background and linguistic knowledge are necessary to achieve understanding of texts then the problem arises as to how, out of the enormous number of discourses which comprise background knowledge, hearers decide which are relevant to the interpretation of a given utterance. The most plausible explanation is derived from the studies carried out by Bransford and Johnson (cited in Greene, 1986, pp. 31-33; Eysenck and Keane, 1990, pp.324-5). In a series of experiments, Bransford and Johnson found that if people are given an apparently incomprehensible passage, perhaps not surprisingly, they have difficulty remembering what was in it and trying to explain what it was about. When the same passage is given to a comparable group of people but on this occasion preceded with a title which gives a clue to the text's interpretation, such as 'Washing Clothes', both comprehension and memory recall increase dramatically.

Cognitive psychologists argue that giving a strong textual clue at the beginning of the passage activates particular areas of knowledge in the memory and these assist comprehension (Greene, 1986, p.33; Ellis and Hunt, 1993, p.231). However, it should be pointed out that whilst this theory is widely accepted as a model of how particular parts of the memory might be activated, it constitutes a description rather than an explanation. This leads Cohen et al. (1993, p.32) to conclude that "explanations of how the correct schema is recognized and activated are unsatisfactory."

The term *schema* in the above quotation refers to a structure of organised information stored in long term memory which represents general knowledge about objects, situations, events and actions (Cook, 1989, p.73; Cohen et al., 1993, p.29). Schemata are linked together in related systems and so an overall schema may consist of a set of sub-schemata (Cohen, 1989, p.71). Just as linguistic and background knowledge operate interactively so do the various aspects of background knowledge. A schema for 'school' may

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include information about such things as buildings, adults, children, sport, music and timetables and these will represent both actual experiences and stereotypical situations (Cook, 1989, pp.69-73). Discourse is likely to be interpreted by several interacting schemata.

Schemata can account for people's ability to make assumptions and inferences and also to generate predictions as to what is likely to occur in particular situations (Eysenck and Keane, 1990, p.285). They are adaptable and develop and change over time as a result of new experiences (Ellis and Hunt, 1993, p.249). Activities which appear to have a superficial similarity can have different meanings for the participants if they invoke different schemata (Tannen and Wallat, 1999, p.356). The terms *schema*, *frame* and *script* are often used interchangeably by authors (Gough and Talbot, 1996, p.35) but Fairclough (1989, p.159) believes that despite their overlaps and interdependencies it is worth distinguishing between them for the purpose of analysis. This paper will also regard them as being separate as they are likely to draw upon different types of intertextual resources.

A *frame* is a data structure for representing a stereotypical situation or location (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, pp. 218-9) and contains essential, default and optional elements.

### Figure 9.1: A 'classroom' frame for British primary schools

Essential elements: walls, floor, ceiling, windows, door, desks, chairs.

Default elements: pupils, teacher, writing board, books, pens, paper.

Optional elements: maps, wastepaper basket, globe, wall charts, computer.

The essential elements are those which would typically define a classroom and the default elements are those which we would expect to be present unless it were stated otherwise. The optional elements may or may not be present in a particular classroom schema. All the elements can be subdivided into further categories such as the colour of the walls, the type of desks and the number of pupils. Frames provide a plan of objects and locations in which

certain elements are predictably present and others are absent. Whilst pens, paper and posters would appear to fit easily into a classroom schema it would be difficult, though not impossible, to include elements such as dreams, motorways or orchestral concerts. A frame which is filled with only essential and default values can be considered as a prototypical representation since it will comprise the characteristic features of a category (Greene, 1987, p.45).

Whereas frames consist of general knowledge about the properties of particular objects and locations, *scripts* consist of general knowledge about particular kinds of events (Cohen et al., 1993, p.29). Scripts are types of schemata which represent knowledge about the kind of routine actions which would be expected to occur in various situations (Greene, 1986, p.116).

Figure 9.2: A script for buying goods from a shop

Enter shop (essential element)

Ask for the items you require (essential element in non-self-service shops)

Discuss with shop assistant size, type, price, or alternative product (optional element)

Pay for it (essential element)

Receive change (default element)

Thank shop assistant (default element)

If the shop were self-service the asking and discussing elements would be omitted but if the customer could not find the product s/he required and asked for assistance, these would be reinserted into the script. Elements of scripts can be re-combined to form other scripts which avoids the burden on the memory which would occur if people needed a separate script for similar but non-identical situations.

Schemata, frames and scripts allow communication to be economical. They are consistent with Grice's (1999, pp.78-79) conversational maxims in that they provide a guide to the amount of detail, evidence, relevance and clarity

that is required in particular situations. This is achieved because people have schemata about other people's schemata (Cook, 1989, p.73). These assumptions are not necessarily valid as schemata have no more claim to represent 'real life' than any other mental concept. People may make false assumptions about the level of shared knowledge with their interlocutors which can result in them being either boring or incomprehensible (ibid., p.74). Successful communication requires a correct estimation of the discourses already available to the hearer because when they are attempting to make sense of utterances people try to match their own background knowledge with that of the writer or speaker (Nunan, 1993, p.71). When interlocutors are using different schemata the result may be confusion and talking at cross purposes (Tannen and Wallat, 1999, p.359).

Utterances are always designed to be understood by a particular audience rather than in isolation. Riffaterre (1990, p.56) believes that the urge to understand compels readers to search for intertexts. Even when a text appears obscure listeners still assume that it must have a meaning and, providing the utterance is intended for them, that they have sufficient shared knowledge with the speaker to comprehend it (Shiro, 1994, pp.169-173).

Whilst the notions of schemata, frames and scripts appear plausible and consistent with everyday experience, they are problematic in certain aspects. The concept of memory schemata is usually credited to Bartlett in the 1930s (Greene and Hicks, 1984, p.93; Eysenck and Keane, 1990, p.275) but most of the recent work in this area has been done by researchers into Artificial Intelligence (Gough and Talbot, 1996, p.228) whose aims are to understand how language and background knowledge interact and then reproduce these processes on computers (Cook, 1989, p.69). Many of the current theories are not derived from studies on actual people and the extent to which computers will ever be able to mimic human thought processes is highly debatable (Ellis and Hunt, 1993, p.9). These models are based on culture-specific knowledge of how the world works (ibid., p.249) and a problem which can arise is that variations in background knowledge may result in



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different interpretations between people of different cultures (Nunan, 1993, p.95). Even people who share the same culture have diverse types of background knowledge so communication can never be a simple process of encoding a message which another person can decode in an unchanged form. Most linguists and philosophers believe that no model can fully systematize background knowledge because meanings are to some extent unique and ephemeral (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, p.132). A further problem with scripts is that they assume a direct correspondence between intentions and actions (Gough and Talbot, 1996, pp.228-9) although in real situations the link may be tenuous (Open University, 1984, Unit 16, pp. 49-56).

Fairclough (1989, p.11) criticises researchers in both cognitive psychology and Artificial Intelligence for overlooking the social origins of background knowledge. His solution is to suggest that the interpretation of texts is an active process which matches the features of the utterance with representations stored in long-term memory and these evoke schemata, frames or scripts which lead to expectations of how subsequent textual cues will be interpreted (*ibid.*, p.159). These concepts are part of *members' resources* which represent the interaction of the social and the cognitive (Fairclough, 1992a, p.72). They are social in the sense that they are generated through social struggles, they are socially transmitted and their unequal distribution is due to the unequal distribution of power in societies (Fairclough, 1989, p.24). They are also cognitive because people have internalised what is socially produced into mental processes which usually operate below the level of conscious awareness (Open University, 1984, Unit 16, p.82). It is not just the nature of these cognitive resources that is socially determined but also the conditions of their use, as social conventions will dictate when and where they should be employed.

Routine and automatic reliance on members' resources is a powerful mechanism for sustaining the relations of power which underpin them (Fairclough, 1989, p.11). Kress (1989, p.10) maintains that discourses work subtly to reduce the contradictions, discontinuities and ambiguities of life by

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“making that which is social seem natural and that which is problematic seem obvious.” *Differences in members’ resources may be just as important in analysing how texts are interpreted as differences in the texts themselves* (Fairclough, 1989, p.14). Fairclough’s concept of members’ resources includes not only schemata, frames and scripts but also the ability to achieve cohesion and coherence between and within discourses, based on background knowledge (1989, p.143; 1992, p. 85). Whilst separation of these concepts is useful for analytical purposes, in practice they are used *interactively to gain an understanding of an utterance and indicate the processes which people use to create and recognize intertextuality.*

## **CHAPTER 10: INTERTEXTUALITY IN PUPIL-TEACHER DISCOURSE**

### **CHAPTER 10**

#### **INTERTEXTUALITY IN PUPIL-TEACHER DISCOURSE**

The previous chapters have considered the nature of intertextuality and some of the ways in which it operates in discourse. The final three chapters of the literature review will discuss its presence in pupil-teacher discourse in general and in SATs in particular. The intention is to provide a general picture rather than a detailed analysis of the ways in which a teacher uses intertextual resources during reading SATs, as this will be the focus of the Findings section.

Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) base their investigation of intertextuality in pupil-teacher discourse explicitly on Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and Volosinov's work on the material consequences of discourse. They argue that intertextuality does not lie in the reader, the writer or even in the relationship between them but is "located in the social interactions people have with each other" (ibid., p.308). They also believe that meaning and intertextuality are inseparable because understanding cannot be obtained solely from decoding words but from their relationship with what has preceded them and what is likely to follow them (ibid., p.309).

According to Bloome and Egan-Robertson (ibid., pp.310-311), meanings are more than just cognitive constructs or an attribute of language but have a material aspect which is sited in the events themselves. Fairclough (1989, p.244) believes that the discourses of the classroom may have long term social consequences as they can be decisive in determining whether the existing, unequal distribution of power is to be reproduced or transformed. Yet Lemke (1995, pp.13-14; 132-4 ) criticises Fairclough for over-emphasizing the ideological functions of power through discourse and neglecting its material aspects which include the ability to cause pain. This may take the form of physical pain such as marital violence, gay-bashing and racial attacks or the emotional pain caused by unemployment, homelessness

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or oppression. Lemke argues that “the power of actions and events is grounded both in their material effects on us and in their cultural meanings for us.” (ibid., p.2)

Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993, p.312) point out that as intertextuality is socially constructed, questions need to be asked concerning ‘entitlement rights’, that is, who has the power to decide which intertextual relationships are appropriate. Entitlement rights encompass cultural ideologies so that certain juxtapositions between texts will be regarded as contributing to valued knowledge whilst others will be deemed unsuitable or irrelevant. The decision as to which other discourses are relevant to those of the classroom is usually made by the teacher. Michaels (cited in Czerniewska, 1992, pp.16-19) found that the preferred method of referring to other texts in the pupils’ spoken discourse is for the links to be made explicit and decontextualised, which are characteristics of expository writing rather than conversation. Pupils who construct links between texts by allusion are likely to be interrupted by a request to make them more explicit and failure to do so may result in the teacher curtailing their contribution (Harris and Trezise, 1997, p.37).

One of the main ways in which teachers control the discourse of the classroom is through the Initiation-Response-Feedback sequences, in which the teacher asks a question, the pupil responds and the teacher evaluates the answer (Edwards and Mercer, 1994, pp.190-202). These Initiation-Response-Feedback sequences serve as discursive devices to fulfil several functions simultaneously. They allow the teacher to check the pupils’ previous knowledge and their understanding of the present lesson, so enabling the teacher to set further questions at an appropriate level. Questions can also be used to control the pupils’ behaviour and Bloome and Egan-Robertson’s (1993, p.318) lesson transcript includes an example of when ‘John’ was playing around in class the teacher did not directly mention this but asked him a question about the story she was telling. John made no reply but stopped playing, sat up and paid attention. We are not told if this

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was the deliberate intention of the teacher but it does indicate that questioning may have both behavioural and cognitive effects.

Young (1992, p.100) has suggested that there are four broad categories of teacher questions which can be grouped according to the knowledge assumed to be possessed by the teacher and pupils.

Table 10.1 Categories of teacher questions

|   | <b>TEACHER KNOWS THE ANSWER</b>                  | <b>TEACHER DOESN'T KNOW THE ANSWER</b>                         |
|---|--|--|
| <b>TEACHER EXPECTS PUPILS TO KNOW THE ANSWER</b>        | 1. Testing or assessment                         | 3. Usually the pupils' <i>personal feelings or experiences</i> |
| <b>TEACHER DOESN'T EXPECT PUPILS TO KNOW THE ANSWER</b> | 2. Pupils are asked to guess or infer the answer | 4. Start of shared enquiry                                     |

(Adapted from Young, 1992, p.100).

Boxes 1 and 2 are typical of traditional, hierarchical teacher-pupil relationships where the teacher is both an authority in, and in authority over, the content of classroom knowledge (ibid., p.111). Box 3 may represent an attempt to link academic discourses with those of the community. The tension between the centripetal forces of the former and the centrifugal forces of the latter is likely to result in a continuous struggle between the 'colonising effect' whereby dominant discourses such as those of education absorb others (Fairclough, 1989, p.36) and a dialogised, multiplicity of perspectives which promotes a critical stance towards language practices (Maclean, 1994, p.249). Box 4 represents what Young (1992, p.103) describes as the 'discourse' style of pedagogy where the pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning and the pupil-teacher relationships are more egalitarian. Young admits that this is found only rarely and can lapse too readily into the kind of investigative learning described by Edwards and Mercer (1994, p.199) in which the teacher covertly controls the content of the lesson and so the pupils' access to different discourses is limited.

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Beach and Anson (1992) explored intertextuality through the concept of stance which is concerned with a person's openness to the ambivalences of discourse and social relationships. Participants in a conversation adopt stances which are consistent with their social roles and relationships and these may foster or suppress the exploration of multiple meanings (ibid., p.338-9). Beach and Anson believe that Initiation-Response-Feedback sequences are unlikely to encourage the exploration of different perspectives because teachers attempt to limit meanings to those consistent with institutional values (ibid., p.339).

Kamberelis and Scott's (1992) study of classroom discourse found that the construction of discourse and the construction of subjectivity functioned interactively. They argue that subjectivities can be both continuous and contradictory, compliant and resilient, diverse yet coherent because they comprise multiple discourses. As these may be in competition with each other, individuals can resist being placed in particular subject positions (ibid., pp.393-397 ). Therefore, whilst Kamberelis and Scott would be likely to agree with Beach and Anson that Initiation-Response-Feedback sequences contribute to defining individuals as teachers or pupils with differential status, Kamberelis and Scott would argue that this is only one aspect of an individual's subjectivity. They believe that discourse is associated with group identity and so ambivalence may indicate membership of competing groups such as those of the school and those of the community. This means that the inferior subject position of 'pupil' in Initiation-Response-Feedback discourse is transient and may not be applicable to other aspects of an individual's subjectivity during different classroom events. Fairclough (1989, p.103) also believes that a range of subject positions produces composite subjectivities but argues that if these are consistently subordinate, over a period of years this will result in people accepting inferior positions as natural or inevitable.

Initiation-Response-Feedback sequences are used to define and control relevant knowledge in the classroom because they are a means of validating what the teacher regards as appropriate knowledge (Young, 1992, p.111;

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Edwards and Mercer, 1994, p.190). This is likely to affect the subject positions of pupils and teachers because the possession of valued knowledge is a form of power (Fairclough, 1989, p.213) and whilst the teacher can overtly evaluate the pupils' contributions, it is unusual for students to openly assess the teacher's discourse. Therefore, the power to decide on what constitutes an appropriate intertextual reference lies very much with the teacher.

Heap (1985, p.265) believes that when teachers use Initiation-Response-Feedback structures to ask questions about reading books, they do not merely require students to describe the contents but also to use their cultural knowledge to make sense of the story in terms of the framework indicated by the teacher's questions. This is consistent with the argument of Mills (1988, p.49) that children not only bring linguistic resources to read texts but also cultural understandings which have been derived from participating in social interactions. Bereiter (1986, p.67) maintains that one of the main purposes of reading book comprehension is to teach students what is, and what is not, admissible knowledge within a particular institution and culture.

The culture which is passed on from teacher to child during these reading lessons is not neutral but reflects the teacher's ideological beliefs and agendas (Kirby, 1996, p.14). Children may find that their own knowledge and experience have to defer to the emphasis which teachers place upon textual features which are endowed with the status of being an unchallengeable authority (ibid., pp. 8-10). Luke et al. (1983, p.125) point out that the authority lies not in the text itself but in the ways in which the text is used by the teacher and this forms part of "the rules of schooling which position teacher, text and student in hierarchical levels of power and authority" (ibid.).

Short (1992) believes that intertextual references are severely limited in hierarchical teacher-pupil relationships because children are encouraged to view the teacher's interpretation of reading books as authoritative. To

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counteract this, she “expended a great deal of energy...toward changing the social relationships within the classroom” (ibid., p.324) and creating ‘literature circles’ whereby pupils and teachers discussed books in an atmosphere of equality, mutual respect, tolerance, understanding and rationality. Whilst this appears to be an idealised form of education, the value of Short’s study is that it explores a vision of “*what could be*” (Schofield, 1993, p.105, author’s italicisation) and so enables us to consider some of the inadequacies of “*what is*” (ibid., p.98, author’s italicisation). Short (1992, p.323) maintains that in egalitarian relationships when learners encounter views contrary to their own, this may encourage them to explore different points of view. This would be less likely in a traditional pedagogic relationship where the delivery of a ‘correct’ answer often terminates a discussion sequence.

Kirby (1996, p.9) argues that when teachers provide their own interpretation of texts this can reduce the pupils’ ability to reach understanding for themselves and so become active and independent learners. However, he (ibid., p.10) also found that some children had difficulty understanding the plot and the language when the teacher did not clarify the texts. Martinez and Teale (1993, pp. 190-191) found that teachers developed frameworks for children to understand and remember stories by asking questions about the crucial information which advanced the story line or which provided important insights into the goals and reactions of the characters. Hvitfeldt (1997, p.19) maintains that reasoning skills can be developed in young children through the critical discussion and evaluation of stories.

The literature cited above suggests that it is not a case of teachers either explaining or not explaining their interpretations of texts but of making nice judgements as to how much interpretation should be done by them and how much should be done by the pupils. Mills (1988) points out that classroom literacy events are not restricted to formal activities such as the teacher reading a story, as many aspects of classroom life are expressed in narrative



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terms. Literacy events cannot be separated from a child's understanding of the social action in which they are embedded (ibid.,p.42).

Teachers use interrogative techniques to steer classroom discourse towards their curricular aims as "question sequences reflect a goal-seeking process or strategy" (Young, 1992, p.96). The conduct of both teachers and pupils is often carried out according to "discursive ground-rules" (Edwards and Mercer, 1994, p.191) which are usually implicit but are recognised by both parties and act as frameworks for the discourse. An example of these tacit understandings is given in Lin (1994, p.386) as she describes how when the teacher says "okay" in a particular discursive context this indicates to the students that a new interactional sequence is about to begin, there will be a change of topic, they should focus attention on the teacher and "listen to what follows". Stierer (1995, p.352) notes that a phrase such as "Good!" may be used to signal the introduction of a new sequence of questioning rather than indicate praise for the pupil's performance.

Lin (1994) demonstrated how a teacher and her pupils constructed implicit agreement over time of what could be considered appropriate and inappropriate references to other texts. Her study is important because the ethnographic observations began on the first lesson of term for pupils entering a new school and yet she was able to show that although the teacher and the pupils were unacquainted, they both had expectations of each other formed by previous experience of school situations. Lin (ibid., p.395) points out that in order for both parties to understand intertextual references the present interaction alone is insufficient and past experiences must also be taken into account. Although Lin is correct in portraying the discourse as jointly constructed by pupils and teacher, she does not give sufficient prominence to the difference in power between them. Her own examples (e.g. ibid., p.400-401) suggest that it was the teacher's pedagogical practices which were mainly responsible for controlling and implicitly defining what could be accepted as legitimate knowledge.

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Harris and Trezise (1997, p.35) found that when teachers failed to understand pupils' intertextual references they either ignored or negated them. The interpersonal relationship was asymmetrical because the teacher's definition of an appropriate intertext was dominant and this often required guesswork on the part of the pupils (*ibid.*, p.37). Young (1992, p. 109) describes this as a game of "Guess What Teacher Thinks" and argues that the validity of an answer is judged by its proximity to what the teacher has in mind.

Pupils also need to understand the implicit rules in the type of teacher questioning which Edwards and Mercer (1994, p.193) describe as 'cued elicitation' in which the teacher provides clues as to what s/he would regard as an appropriate answer. This acts as a constraint upon the type of intertextual resources which pupils are likely to draw upon, as a successful response needs to be based on these clues. One of the problems with this technique is that if the pupils merely supply the answers which they think the teacher is seeking then this may conceal a lack of understanding on their part (*ibid.*, p.200). This can form part of a 'procedural display' (Bloome, 1994, p.106) or 'ritual' knowledge (Edwards and Mercer, 1994, p.200) whereby it appears that learning is taking place if the pupils reproduce what the teacher regards as the important facts, concepts and terminology even though the pupils' actual understanding may be highly problematic. Clayden et al. (1994, p.164) argue that young children may regard the working practices of the classroom as being more important than the teacher's attempts to convey abstract ideas.

Another technique used in question and answer sequences is when the teacher paraphrases, reformulates or summarises the pupils' responses so that they are closer to the intended aims of the lesson (Young, 1992, pp. 113-4) and to construct explicit agreement (Stierer, 1995, p.352). By selecting only certain elements for recapitulation teachers are able to presuppose other elements as understood and so prevent discussion of them

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(Edwards and Mercer, 1994, p.194). This enables the teacher to shape the discourse and to classify, either implicitly or explicitly, particular aspects of experience as being of academic significance. These 'reformulations' are often presented by the teacher as if they were the pupils' ideas although the extent to which they actually represent the pupils' concepts is uncertain (Bloome, 1994, p.106). Young (1992, p.113) points out that as teachers often reformulate answers without making an explicit reference to the defects in the original response or even acknowledging that a correction has been made, they do not allow pupils the opportunity to consider how the response might have been improved. In this manner, the apparently neutral pedagogical practices of paraphrasing and summarising often serve to allow the substitution of the teacher's intertextual references for those of the pupils.

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An event which was to have significant effects on pedagogical practices occurred in September 1988 when the National Curriculum was introduced into Year 1 classrooms in all state-maintained schools in England and Wales. An important feature of this programme was that pupils should be formally assessed near the end of Key Stage 1 when these children were in Year 2 (aged 6 or 7). The Government-appointed Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) had produced a report which envisaged that assessment would comprise Teacher Ratings, as a form of continuous monitoring, and Standard Assessment Tasks which were to be completed at a specific time. The SATs were meant to be integrated, activity-based tasks which would form part of normal classroom procedures (Torrance, 1991, p.1). The intention was to encapsulate the essential points of good practice and include not just knowledge but skills, understandings and processes (Sainsbury, 1996, p.1). However, the SATs were designed and developed “under intense time pressure with a subsequent lack of intensive piloting” (Davies and Brember, 1994, p.81).

The criteria of satisfactory performance was the extent to which pupils achieved the Standards of Attainment which had been set out in the National Curriculum documents. The TGAT viewed the tasks as providing both formative assessment, which would enable teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils, and summative assessment which would provide an estimate of a pupil’s ability at a particular time.

It had been argued that this type of ‘authentic’ or ‘performance’ assessment in SATs would enhance learning and produce benefits such as greater student motivation and more equitable assessment of pupils who differed in race, culture or home language from those of the majority group (Thomas et al.,

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1998, pp.214-5). These claims may have been somewhat optimistic as Gipps (1995, p.2) believes that if the test constructors define success in terms of the dominant group's attitudes and beliefs towards the subject, then other groups will be disadvantaged no matter what type of assessment is used. Thomas et al. (1998, p.215) believe that whilst 'authentic' or 'performance' assessment terminology has positive connotations, this disguises the fact that all such evaluations rely on a small sample of behaviour from a larger domain and from this, inferences are drawn about the abilities of individuals or groups.

The 1991 and 1992 Key Stage 1 SATs were described by Professor Paul Black, former chairperson of TGAT, as "a monumental cock-up" (news item, *British Journal of Curriculum and Assessment*, 1992, p.6) and other critics echoed similar sentiments, although in more academic language (e.g. Campbell, 1992; Clarke, 1991; Kadir, 1992; Peel, 1992; Sapsed, 1991; Woodward, 1991). The major practical problem posed by the SATs was the substantial additional workload imposed upon Year 2 teachers (Davies and Brember, 1998, p.158; Sainsbury, 1996, p.2). They found it impossible to incorporate SATs into normal classroom routines, as was the original intention, and pupils who were not taking part in current SAT activities received sparse teacher attention (Sapsed, 1991, p.8) which led to complaints from parents (Clarke, 1996, p.13). Disruption occurred throughout the schools, as teaching staff and material resources had to be diverted to Year 2 classrooms and Year 2 teachers were unable to undertake their usual curricular and administrative tasks (Abbott et al., 1994, p.7; Torrance, 1991, p.3). These problems caused the major teaching unions to boycott the 1993 and 1994 SATs.

In 1994, the Government-appointed Dearing Committee proposed that many of the tasks should be replaced by tests which would be simpler to administer and hence reduce the workload on teachers. SATs should be used mainly for formative assessment and only if they were 'cost-effective' (Sizmur et al., 1996, p.7). Standard assessment became more streamlined, limited in scope and 'pencil and paper' in character (Shorrocks, 1993, p.12). The Dearing

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Committee also recommended that instead of having to achieve the Standards of Attainment pupils should be graded according to whether, in the teacher's opinion, they fitted the exemplars of grades given in the SAT handbooks. The Government accepted these recommendations and the SATs were changed accordingly.

The Dearing Report was greeted with ambivalent responses from the teaching profession (Murphy, 1994, pp.10-12). Whilst there was relief that some of the workload and disruption caused by the Key Stage 1 SATs would be reduced, their replacement by standardised tests caused concern.

Although these tests would cause relatively little extra work or disruption there were considerable doubts as to whether they could represent a valid assessment of a child's understanding of the National Curriculum. Torrance (1993, p.5) argues that young children tend to derive clues from the immediate context and may not understand that they will be expected to provide decontextualised knowledge. Also, he believes that the SATs constructors have assumed that the testing process will be entirely transparent and that teachers will be able to obtain unambiguous answers from Year 2 pupils. Clarke (1991, p.11) maintains that "standard assessment of six- and seven-year-olds is simply inappropriate" as the as children may not understand the purposes or procedures of the tasks. Gipps (1992, p.6) believes that SAT results may lead to the labelling of young children and consequent damage to their developing self-confidence.

In 1995 a norm-referenced reading test was administered to Year 2 pupils as an optional addition to the reading task but in the following year it became compulsory. This is a 'pencil and paper' comprehension test which has to be completed without assistance from the teacher, other than reading out the specified instructions.

The paradox of assessment at Key Stage 1 is that the shorter and more manageable the tasks become, then the less they can be compared with normal classroom practice (Shorrocks, 1993, p.12) and the less

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representative they may be of the subject being assessed (Sizmur et al., 1996, p.11). Frater (1995, p.13) sums this up as: “the easier it is to administer, the more arbitrary a test’s selectivity will be.” On the other hand, tasks that parallel normal classroom behaviour were found to be too demanding of resources when they were used to assess pupils individually. Also it is difficult to compare the performance of different pupils if the tasks are tailored to their individual skills and needs.

The future of the remaining Standard Assessment Tasks looked doubtful in 1995 when The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to evaluate both the remaining tasks and the newly-introduced tests. However, the NFER Report found that most teachers preferred to retain the reading task and valued its diagnostic element (Sizmur et al., 1996, p.10). This was consistent with the findings of earlier research such as Sapsed (1991, p.9), Peel (1992, p.30) and Shorrocks (1993, p.9) who reported that although teachers regarded the task as time-consuming they felt it provided useful information about pupils’ errors in reading and had improved their own assessment skills.

The NFER Report also found that the reading comprehension test assessed too narrow a range of the National Curriculum and presented particular difficulties to weaker readers (Sizmur et al., 1996, p.11). They recommended that the reading task should be retained so that “in this case, at least, the original TGAT proposal to combine formative and summative purposes in assessment seems to have found approval” (ibid.). Despite this, the reading task was replaced by the written test for those Key Stage 1 pupils who were judged by their teachers to be capable of achieving level 3. Only if they ‘failed’ this test would they be obliged to take the level 2 task.

The reading task is one of the few Standard Assessment Tasks to have survived with some resemblance of its original form to the present time (September 2000). A major element, for children judged to be at level 2, is

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the “running record” whereby a child has to read a specified 100 word passage from a reading book chosen by the pupil from an approved list. The pupil’s errors are noted by the teacher and the pupil is also required to demonstrate an understanding of the book in response to teacher questions. Children judged to be at level 1 do not have to undertake the running record. (Further details of current procedures are included in the Appendix.)

A noticeable difference between present and earlier versions of the reading SAT is that the latter included assessment of a pupil’s contribution to a group discussion of a book (Clarke, 1991, p.8). Grading is now conducted solely on an individual performance which is symptomatic of the way assessment at Key Stage 1 has moved away from the original ideals of observing the child’s normal classroom behaviour to a more rigid, streamlined, but decontextualised approach (Sainsbury, 1996, p.3)

The literature cited above suggests a tension between the desires of the policymakers and SAT designers on the one hand and practitioners on the other. The former appear to desire a reading SAT which is both rigorous and reflects normal classroom practices whilst teachers find that these aims are, to some extent, incompatible. This research project has been designed to investigate this tension and to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate how a teacher manages to negotiate between these conflicting influences. Will she be dominated by the strength of the official SATs discourses or will she demonstrate a considerable amount of autonomy? Or will she fluctuate between the two as Bakhtin’s model of centripetal and centrifugal forces would suggest? These questions are of importance to both practitioners and policymakers and they offer the opportunity to reflect on the relationship between theory and practice in education.



### CHAPTER 12

#### READING TASKS - THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

The 1999 Teacher's Handbook (QCA, 1998) contains 26 pages of instructions/advice/suggestions on how the reading SATs should be implemented, although in mass-produced documents the authors cannot know which discourses will be used by readers to interpret the text. Therefore, an 'ideal reader' with particular intertextual experiences is constructed although the writer's assessment of the readers' intertexts may not necessarily be correct (Fairclough, 1989, p.153). As the Teacher's Handbooks are intended for an audience of teachers it is likely that the authors will assume certain common intertexts based on both background and pedagogic knowledge. Fairclough (ibid., p.102) suggests that "each discourse type establishes its particular set of subject positions, which those who operate within it are constrained to occupy." The QCA handbooks might be regarded as an example of such an constraint.

Yet a strong argument against the text-based theories of critical linguistics is that people do not actually interpret texts according to the analysts' assumptions. Hall (1994, pp.209-211) points out that readers may adopt compliant, negotiated or oppositional responses, Meinhof (1994, p.214) argues that texts are polysemic and therefore capable of many interpretations, whilst Moss (1994) criticises Fairclough for being too deterministic and over-emphasising the passivity of readers. On the other hand, communication would be impossible if people did not attempt to interpret discourses according to what they believe are the speaker's intentions, using contextual clues to assist them (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.23). Hall (1994, p.208) maintains that whilst there will be differences between a speaker's encoding of a message and a hearer's decoding of it, unless the decodings are highly eccentric they will be constructed within parameters shaped by the encodings.

In their discussion of the 1991 SATs handbook, Abbott et al. (1994, p.5) classify three strategies by which those in powerful positions persuade others to carry out their wishes. There is the *empirical-rational* mode whereby arguments are based on logic and assumed to appeal to enlightened self-interest, the *normative-reeducative* mode based on the belief that practice will change only if attitudes and values are changed, and the *power-coercive* mode whereby practices will change as a result of imposition by those in authority.

The *empirical-rational* and *normative-reeducative* modes represent influence whilst the *power-coercive* mode represents control. Abbott et al. believe that the 1991 SATs handbook uses a combination of these approaches and argue that the style of the handbook is based on “kindly encouragement” using a “vocabulary of trust and reassurance [which] is counterbalanced by commands” (ibid., p.5). The first few pages are “frequently imperative in tone” (ibid.) which suggests to Abbott et al. that the preferred mode is that of control.

Although the content of the Teacher's Handbook has altered over the years to reflect changes in the reading SATs, the style has remained similar as the 1997, 1998 and 1999 handbooks contain a mixture of advice, suggestions and explicit instructions. They are presumably intended to be read as authoritative documents which describe in detail how the reading SATs should be carried out. This is indicated by the abundance of modal auxiliary verbs such as *should* or *must* which combine with the main verb to act as imperatives, such as “The task **must** be carried out with a book from the appropriate list” (QCA, 1998, p.2, authors' emphasis). The use of bold print appears to be a device for confirming that this is obligatory rather than advisory.

An example of the abundance of commands occurs on page 4 of the 1998 handbook (QCA, 1997) where *should* is used on nine occasions and *must*

three times and these auxiliaries are always used in the imperative mode. A concentration of the same or similar words is described by Fairclough as 'overwording' and often represents a focus of ideological struggle (1989, p.115.). This is consistent with the view that the QCA needs to convince teachers that by using these techniques, it is both possible and desirable to measure the reading abilities of six- and seven-year-old children.

Imperatives are used frequently elsewhere in the Handbook. Page 11 (QCA, 1997) directs teachers to "begin by talking..."; "make brief notes..."; "**now follow the instructions...**"(authors' bold print); "ask the child..."; "read the book..."; "allow the child..." and "offer the child...". Close (1974, p.145) maintains that imperatives are commonly used in technical instructions.

Statements in the handbook usually occur in what Fairclough (1991, p.159) describes as the 'objective modality' in which the mode is categorical, indicating that the propositions are self-evident and so the writer does not need to attach any degree of uncertainty to them.

These tasks provide a broad assessment of the children's reading, allowing them to demonstrate their ability to read aloud from a text, show what they have understood and give a personal response. (QCA, 1997, p.8)

The certainty of the writer is expressed in the lack of modifiers and Fairclough (1992a, p.159) believes that the frequent use of objective modality usually indicates the superior power of the speaker/writer. If modifiers were added to the above passage it might read as:

These tasks [*may*] provide a broad assessment of children's reading, allowing them to demonstrate [*some aspects of*] their ability to read aloud from a text, show [*part of*] what they have understood and [*may*] give [*them an opportunity*]

*to make*] a personal response. (Examples of modifiers are in italics)

This version lacks the 'taken for granted' nature of the original in the Teacher's Handbook but presenting contentious issues as though they were obvious serves to forestall discussion of them (Kress, 1989, p.10). The addition of modifiers may provide a more realistic view of the reading SATs as representing only a rough guide to a child's reading abilities (Stainthorp, 1997, p.37), of which only some aspects will be assessed (Torrance, 1991, p.4). Also, there may be factors other than lack of understanding which limit a child's ability to make a personal response, such as different cultural values or difficulty in speaking English (Alston, 1996, p.2; Sammons et al., 1997, p.507).

The handbook also implies that the reading task will allow children "to show their best attainments" (QCA, 1997, p.5) and "demonstrate their highest reading attainments" (ibid., p.10). Stierer and Bloome (1994, p.17) argue that *reading ability* could describe either a child's actual performance or a more abstract competence which may not be always be manifest. The instructions given in the handbook seem to beg the question of what a teacher should do if s/he believes that a pupil's performance does not reflect her/his full capabilities. No instructions or suggestions are provided as to what should be done under these circumstances and the paragraph below appears to offer somewhat equivocal advice:

The range of children's needs is such that it is neither sensible nor possible to attempt to provide detailed advice to cover every individual circumstance. Teachers should use their professional judgement and their knowledge of individual children to decide how best to make the tasks accessible to all children whilst maintaining the rigour of the assessment. (QCA, 1997, p.4)

Whilst this might seem to be a reasonable approach, it does leave many decisions as to how the tasks should be carried out to the 'professional judgement' of individual teachers.

The teachers in McCallum's (1991) study thought that it was of critical importance to encourage the children to produce their best performance. The strategies they used to achieve this included giving pupils practice in SAT procedures, removing disruptive children, stopping the tasks if they thought the children were tired and re-testing children who seemed flustered (*ibid.*, p.14). Matthews (1994, p.23) found similar teacher tactics during the Key Stage 1 mathematics SATs. Whilst this may represent 'professional judgement' it makes it difficult to compare results if the nature of the tasks varies between different pupils and different teachers.

Sapsed (1991, p.8) and Kadir (1992, p.7) found that there was considerable disagreement between teachers as to whether pupils had achieved the necessary criteria to be awarded a particular level. Shorrocks (1993, p.11) argues that the SATs' grading procedures are insufficiently clear and precise for assessment purposes and that in order to make sense of them, teachers compare performance to what an average child might achieve. This transforms the assessment into norm-referencing, rather than the criterion-referencing which it is intended to be.

Plewis (1997, p.245), Sammons et al. (1997, p.507) and Thomas et al. (1998, p.234) all found that some of the variations in results were due to differences between teachers in their interpretations of SAT procedures and grading. In a study commissioned by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) Hall et al. (1995) found that although most teachers carried out the reading tasks in a broadly similar manner, there was still too high a level of divergence. They recommended the SCAA to:

“emphasize further the need for rigorous application of the instructions for the administration of Tasks and Tests in order to ensure maximum dependability.” (ibid., p.22)

Teachers are not free to interpret the instructions in too idiosyncratic a manner as Local Authorities have a statutory duty to appoint moderators to ensure that there are consistent standards of administration (Johnstone and Jones, 1995, p.11), although this does assume a consensus as to what these standards are. The moderators are required to be “authoritative” if schools refuse to change “inadequacies” in their allocation of grades (ibid., p.12).

If the phrase “maintaining the rigour of the assessment” (QCA, 1997, p.4) is assumed to mean some form of standardisation then this would be consistent with the detailed instructions given in parts of the SATs handbook. Yet *standardisation seems to be incompatible with teachers using their “professional judgement and knowledge of individual children”* (ibid.) in order to make the tasks suitable for each pupil. An essential aspect of tests in which the results of one person are compared with those of another is that the major variables should be controlled (Open University, 1996, Section 7). If teachers implement the reading tasks in varying ways then comparisons between the grades awarded would be unreliable. According to Sapsed (1991, p.9), this ambivalence led some teachers to try to ‘standardise’ the task themselves by using just one book for all the children who were taking a particular level. Abbott et al. (1994, p.14) found that both Year 2 teachers and head teachers expressed concern over the degree of subjective judgement required in SATs. Davies and Brember (1994, p.81) also concluded that grading in the reading SATs was dependent on subjective judgements.

The handbooks may not be directly responsible for all the variations between teachers but the findings of these studies imply that either teachers do not follow the handbooks’ instructions or that they find them open to differing interpretations. The latter would be of no surprise to apologists of

deconstruction but might cause concern to SAT designers who may have assumed common interpretations of their procedures.

Despite the detailed instructions, Standard Assessment Tasks are not standardised or norm-referenced and this means they will have different criteria for reliability and validity than standardised tests (Stainthorp, 1997, pp.37-38; Gipps, 1992, p.3). The British Psychological Association's criticisms of the reading task as "an extremely crude assessment system" with "an unknown degree of error" (cited in Campbell, 1992, p.38) is valid only if the assumptions are made that the reading SATs were intended to be precise instruments and that it is possible to measure the reading ability of six- and seven-year-olds without appreciable error.

Whilst the variations between teachers is a major weakness when SATs are used for summative purposes, it may have certain advantages if they are used for comparative purposes. In this case, if teachers use their knowledge of local circumstances combined with the needs of individual pupils, then this may place them in a better position to facilitate learning than in trying to meet nationally imposed criteria (Alston, 1996, p.3).

The overall purpose of the handbook appears to be to provide teachers with criteria by which a specific set of reading practices can be assessed. Yet this ignores the fact that there are many definitions of reading (Stierer and Bloome, 1994, pp.7-8) and that reading is a social practice and not just a set of decontextualised skills (ibid.). The handbook conceals the ideological nature of reading assessment because:

The creation of a single definition of reading (which is itself a literary practice) creates a standard that legitimises giving power, rewards and resources to those who adhere to authorised reading practices and denies it to others; and, perniciously, it makes the distribution of power based on

adherence to a standard model of reading seem common-sensical and unassailable. (ibid., p.10, authors' parentheses)



### CHAPTER 13 AN OVERVIEW

The literature review has endeavoured to provide a critical summary of published work concerning the relevance of intertextuality to educational theory and practice. The review was also intended to identify areas which have been relatively unexplored, such as the present lack of any published studies of intertextuality in Key Stage 1 SATs.

Whilst a variety of theoretical concepts have been discussed in Part B, the following sections will be concerned with the ways in which these concepts occur in actual classroom discourses. For example, Bakhtin's theories are based on philosophical and literary analyses and need to be evaluated against real speech situations. It is necessary to discover the extent to which concepts such as addressivity, authoritative discourse and centripetal/centrifugal forces are found in pupil-teacher interactions. Whilst their absence would not necessarily invalidate Bakhtin's theories, it would suggest limitations on their use as analytic tools for educational research projects. If the theoretical concepts are found to be present, then it will be necessary to assess how useful are they in analysing the data.

The conclusions of the empirical studies discussed in the literature review also need to be evaluated against the findings of this study, as it takes place in a different context. Of the three studies which most closely resemble the present one, Bloome and Egan-Robertson's (1993) was conducted in an American classroom whilst Maclean (1994) and Harris and Trezise (1997) carried out their studies in Australian schools. The KS1 reading SATs, on which this project is based, are unique to the English and Welsh education systems.

The literature review has discussed the various ways in which a knowledge of intertextuality can lead to a better understanding of the discourses used by

## **CHAPTER 13: AN OVERVIEW**

pupils and teachers. Such knowledge has the potential to make a valuable contribution to professional practice and policy in education. A further purpose of the review has been to provide the framework for a set of investigative tools which can be used to analyse the data and these will be discussed in the following section.

# CHAPTER 14: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

## PART C: METHODOLOGY

### CHAPTER 14

#### EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The methods adopted in this project are consistent with the six features which Hammersley (1994, pp.1-2) describes as typical of ethnographic research. This study:

- is concerned with an analysis of empirical data.
- is derived from a 'real world' context rather than manipulated conditions.
- uses observation and relatively informal conversations as the main sources of data.
- uses unstructured methods of data collection where the categories are not predetermined.
- concentrates on a small group in a single setting.
- analyses data through the interpretation of meanings and presents findings mainly in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

Terms such as *qualitative method*, *case study*, *interpretative research*, *inductive research* and *naturalistic inquiry* may be used as synonyms for 'ethnography' (Hammersley, 1994, p.1; Merriam, 1998, p.5). On occasions it will be useful to distinguish between them in order to indicate their different emphases but otherwise this paper will use *ethnographic research* as a generic term to characterise the variety of approaches which are associated with the six principles outlined above.

No method of educational research is inherently superior to any other method as they all have their own advantages and drawbacks. Research methods should be regarded as tools of enquiry and their selection will depend upon the particular task which has to be tackled. A tool which is

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*admirably suited for one task may be totally inappropriate for another. It will be argued that an ethnographic approach using discourse analysis to analyse the data (see Chapter 16) was the most appropriate method to answer the focal and subsidiary questions which were at the centre of this project. In order to assess how successfully they have been answered, the limitations of ethnography and discourse analysis must be considered. Stating the imperfections of an approach does not undermine a project and is preferable to making unwarranted assertions. Both strengths and weaknesses need to be evaluated so that when decisions are made whether to implement the findings of educational research, these are made upon an informed basis as possible. A further reason for discussing the limitations of a method is that researchers are prompted to devise ways of ameliorating them.*

Qualitative studies “embrace the paradoxes inherent in the people we study and explore rather than try to resolve the tensions embedded in them” (Simons, 1996, p.11). As a result, their findings often contain qualifiers, uncertainties and reservations and these tentative statements may seem a poor alternative to the confident assertions of quantitative reports. Yet if the aim of educational research is to produce critical inquiry which can inform decisions concerning educational practice (Bassey, 1999, p.59), then the portrayal by qualitative studies may be more useful than the simplified, decontextualised versions which often emerge from quantitative studies.

The strength of ethnographic research is that it has the potential to portray the intricacies of people, events and places in such depth that readers can obtain a “vicarious experience” of the particular setting (Stake, 1995, p.48). Hammersley (1992, p.185) argues that all research strategies involve “trade-offs” in the sense that to have more of one thing usually means that one has to settle for less of something else. Qualitative research has the potential to provide both greater similarity to actual situations and more comprehensive details than quantitative research but this usually entails producing complex categories which may be specific to particular circumstances. Whereas quantitative research often seeks to minimise differences in order to reach

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overall conclusions concerning a relatively large number of cases, qualitative researchers seek knowledge in depth (Simons, 1996, p.2). This means that they usually investigate a relatively small number of cases but the increased focus should produce differentiation which a broader approach might overlook. Qualitative research studies have the potential to be sensitive to small but significant, naturally occurring changes in context and can portray events in actual social environments as, in this case, pupil-teacher interactions during a SAT.

The information provided in many qualitative studies may seem unduly vague when compared to the precise numbers which are presented in quantitative studies, which may imply accuracy to several decimal places. Yet the imprecise terms used in ethnographic studies may provide the reader with a sounder basis for judging the evidence than numbers which offer spurious precision. It can be argued that certain aspects of human behaviour are not amenable to measurement without significant impairment of their essential qualities (Stevens, 1983, p.116). Sikes (1999, p.ix) argues that if the findings of educational research can be expressed in mathematical terms, they are unlikely to be sophisticated enough to account for the complexity of classroom situations. The imprecise terms used in qualitative studies may actually be an advantage and Bassey (1999, p.12) believes they demonstrate “the value of imprecision rather than phoney exactness”, in that they act as a caveat against simplistic recipes for improving educational practice.

Another frequently cited disadvantage of ethnographic studies is that because they are concerned with only a small number of cases, it is not possible to generalize their findings. If this is true, is it worth going to all the trouble and expense of doing a study if the findings are only applicable to that particular situation?

The ethnographer’s response to this question would be that there are various types of generalization (Hammersley, 1992, p.189). Scientific generalization expresses laws which are valid at all times and in all places, providing certain

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key variables remain constant. Bassey argues that scientific generalization cannot be applied to educational research because the variables are too many and too complex:

A litre of oxygen in Hong Kong will have exactly the same properties as a litre of oxygen in New York, but the same cannot be expected of a classroom of children from each of these two cities - nor from two classrooms in the same city.  
(1999, p.45)

Bassey (ibid., p.12) maintains that there are few valid scientific generalizations of any kind concerning educational practice and of these, even fewer are of any use to experienced teachers. Withers (1988, p.24) believes that the quest for generalization may reduce the usefulness of educational theory to practice: "In their search for generalizability, researchers have found themselves with little to say that has relevance to actual classrooms."

The two main types of generalization in educational research are generalizations within the case, e.g. *the teacher frequently encouraged her pupils* and generalizations to other settings, e.g. *teachers frequently encourage their pupils*. Generalizations within the case can be supported by evidence such as transcripts or field notes. Although these rely on the researcher's interpretation of the data, they provide a synthesis of what has occurred whilst accepting that there are likely to be exceptions to the general statements.

Generalizations within the case have to be valid otherwise extrapolation to other settings will merely disseminate unwarranted conclusions. One way of reducing the likelihood of error in qualitative studies is to use triangulation, which entails comparing data from more than one source to see if it supports the conclusions which are being drawn. Triangulation can never prove that a generalization within the case is valid although it may increase confidence in

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it. If data from different sources appear to be incongruent then the researcher should not merely opt for one set rather than another but use the discrepancies to probe the issues in greater depth (Bryman, 1988, p.134). Stake (1996, p.115) suggests that inconsistencies in triangulation may indicate that there is more than one plausible interpretation of the same phenomenon.

Bassey's (1999, p.12) solution to the problem of generalization to other settings is to suggest that ethnographers propose *fuzzy generalizations* of their findings. Fuzzy generalization makes no absolute claim to knowledge but deliberately qualifies its conclusions with hedges such as "it may be found that..." or "in some cases it appears that...". According to Bassey (ibid., pp.51-52), these qualified generalizations are more likely to invite teachers to discuss educational research with colleagues and to try out the ideas in their own classrooms than claims which offer a facile certainty and general applicability. He suggests that all studies should conclude with a fuzzy generalization which would indicate "how the discovery *may* apply more widely" (ibid., p.55, author's italicization).

Stake (1995, p.85) suggests that the findings of qualitative studies are relevant to other educational processes through *naturalistic generalizations*. These are "conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience". He (ibid., pp.86-87) argues that this kind of generalization is individualised and may even be difficult to put into words as the translation from cognition to formal language diminishes and distorts meaning. He believes that researchers should use "ordinary language and narratives" so that "the report may read something like a story" (ibid., p.134) which makes it easier for readers to empathise with the situation.

The advantage of the kind of generalizations recommended by Stake are that readers are not obliged to adopt a "take it or leave it" attitude to the findings of a study but can recognise similarities to their own situation and so relate it to their own practice. Schofield (1993, p.108) points out that merely

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comparing the situation described in a report to one's own is insufficient. It is necessary to consider what aspects of the situation are similar or different and how these comparisons can be used to improve particular aspects of practice. In order to facilitate this, detailed descriptions are required of the context and considerable evidence in the form of transcripts should be included in the report.

Stake (1995, p.86) believes that naturalistic generalization is the usual method people have for making sense of everyday experience as they learn from comparisons of what is common or dissimilar to their own situation. This is an eclectic process and people concentrate on those aspects which seem to be pertinent to their own circumstances whilst paying less attention to those which appear irrelevant. The notion that teachers acquire knowledge from general descriptive information rather than specific theories is consistent with the *enlightenment model* of educational research (Open University, 1996, p.27). This type of research provides people with insights that may enable them to see situations and problems in a new light and is "less direct but potentially more pervasive" in shaping teachers' orientation to their work (ibid.). Teachers may prefer the implicit appeal to use their own professional experience and judgement rather than merely adopt the findings of others.

The major rationale for case study is its potential to explore instances in depth and from a holistic perspective (Simons, 1996, p.1). The aim of this project is to produce a thorough account of a teacher's intertextual resources during a series of complete reading SATs. The emphasis on depth and a holistic approach is especially appropriate for a study of intertextuality which, even for a single individual, is an extremely complex, yet integrated process. Most of the studies which have investigated the intertextuality of spoken discourse in the classroom, such as those of Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993), Maclean (1994), and Harris and Trezise (1997) have focused on a single teacher. Even when the study has been centred on the intertextual resources of pupils, the researchers have found it necessary to



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use a small number so that the topic can be investigated in sufficient depth. An example of this is the study by Kamberelis and Scott (1992) who focused on only two pupils in a forty-four page journal article.

Case studies can also be used to relate a single phenomenon to more general theory (Golby, 1994, p.15). This means that "...a single case can be the beginning of a general argument, or develop concepts that can be applied to other studies, or have serious repercussions for one claiming universality" (Open University, 1996, p.101). Recently there has been a burgeoning of interest in the applicability of Bakhtin's theories in areas such as education (Pearce, 1994, p.80). This study has investigated the extent to which some of his theories are compatible with empirical data and so when there is sufficient evidence to warrant it, fuzzy generalizations of the kind described by Bassey will be included in Chapter 24.

The rationale behind this case study is to provide the reader with the opportunity to engage in the type of naturalistic generalization recommended by Stake (1995, p.85). Whilst there will undoubtedly be many idiosyncrasies in the discourse of the teacher who is at the centre of this research project, whom I have referred to as Ms. Bright, it is also likely that there will be many features in common with the discourses of other teachers who are carrying out the reading SATs. The Teacher's Handbooks used by Ms. Bright were also used by every teacher responsible for the Key Stage 1 reading SATs and so whilst each of their interpretations will be to some extent unique, it seems probable that they will have much in common.

This study was concerned with the intertextual processes an individual uses when creating utterances. In addition to discovering which specific discourses were salient during the SATs I was interested in finding out about the ways in which they combined with each other or remained mutually exclusive. Whilst the actual combinations which were used are likely to remain unique to Ms. Bright and the particular context in which she worked,

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some of the processes which she used are likely to be found in many types of discourse.

The epistemology of qualitative researchers tends to be based on the belief that knowledge concerning human behaviour is socially constructed rather than expressing an external reality (Stake, 1995, p.43). This means that it is not possible to describe discourses or social situations in a purely objective manner because all descriptions are filtered through language, which in turn reflects the subjectivity of the producer. The construction of knowledge is always an interpretation because we can only perceive phenomena through our senses which are influenced by previous, culturally-fashioned, experiences. Usher (1996a, p.28) maintains that social reality does not exist beyond discourse so that “the real and the discursive are intimately interwoven” (ibid., p.30). Eisner (1993, p.51) believes that in order to know if data correspond to reality we would need to know what reality is, but all we have are different perspectives of it.

Although Eisner (ibid., p.54) denies that the pluralistic nature of knowledge will lead to “mindless relativism” there is a danger that if all perspectives are considered to have verisimilitude then it becomes difficult to assess their worth. Yet it is usually possible to present more convincing evidence in support of one argument rather than another, even if the evidence can never be conclusive. Stake (1995, p.102) contends that to maintain all things are of equal value is an absolutist rather than a relativist view, whereas to believe that interpretations vary according to their credibility and utility is consistent with a relativist approach.

A criticism which could be made of ethnographic work is that it is too subjective and dependent upon the whims and biases of the researcher. Ball (1993, p.43) admits that if his ethnographic study had been conducted by another researcher the findings would not have been the same although the differences “typically would be small rather than large” and concern emphasis and orientation rather than substantive issues. Stake (1995, p.102) maintains

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that although qualitative researchers will have differing views as to what is actually occurring in a particular situation, the reality that they are describing must be capable of withstanding scrutiny and challenge from the research community.

If it is accepted that reports are relative in the sense that the researchers' contributions are unique because they represent the interaction of their discursive history and their social position (Kress, 1989, p.12) then the question arises as to how far researchers should write themselves into their reports. Rhedding-Jones (1996, p.8) believes that writing herself into her study was both inevitable and necessary as it reduced the power differences between researcher and those being researched, and between writer and reader. She argues that "the insertion of subjectivity" (ibid.) facilitates multiple readings of texts as compared to the traditional, patriarchal attempts to impose the researchers' ideas on to their audiences. Ball (1993, p.46) prefers to use "I" when writing ethnographic accounts rather than alluding to "the researcher" as he believes that this clarifies the dependency of the data on his own subjectivity.

Peshkin (1988, pp.19-20) argues that understanding their own subjectivities can make researchers aware of, and so able to counteract, biases in their studies which result from their own predilections, dislikes or indifference. He also maintains that this will help to avoid "the trap of perceiving just that which my own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data" (ibid., p.20). Whilst researchers cannot avoid writing themselves into their reports, the study should avoid becoming "blatantly autobiographical" (ibid.) as this would miss the purpose of the research which is to discover more about educational practices.

Following Peshkin's advice, I feel it is necessary to mention something about my own beliefs. I have been a primary school teacher for over twenty years and have viewed with increasing disquiet the ways in which young children are being subjected to formal testing procedures. I am also concerned that

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the results of these tests can be used to compare individual pupils, teachers and schools as if they all had a similar chance of success. I believe that such tests undervalue children whose qualities lie in attributes which, although not amenable to measurement, are of equal merit.

As to the nature of the evidence which can be obtained from any kind of educational research, I believe that Bakhtin's (1986, p.85) notion of addressivity is particularly relevant, in that every utterance is intended to have an effect upon a particular audience. This audience includes the producer. Therefore, what I think and write about my beliefs is not a key which will unlock a true interpretation of this study but yet another clue which will hopefully, but not inevitably, produce a deeper understanding of the ways in which I have described and explained these events.

### CHAPTER 15 SOURCES OF DATA

The selection of the school and the teacher was done on the grounds of practicality and accessibility. As I needed to conduct interviews with Ms. Bright several times a week during May and June each year it was essential that I chose a school which was within reasonable travelling distance from my own place of work. Also, as I already knew both the headteacher and Ms. Bright, I believed that this would increase my chances of being allowed to collect whatever data was necessary for my project.

From their point of view, it was important for Ms. Bright and the headteacher to feel that I was trustworthy. SATs are a sensitive and potentially controversial area and they needed to feel confident that the research would be carried out in a manner which would not be detrimental to the children's performance or to the reputation of the school. I am not suggesting that my ethical values are higher than those of any other researcher but I believe the fact that I was known to key individuals facilitated access and encouraged Ms. Bright to be candid more readily than if I were a stranger who needed to gain her trust. However, a disadvantage of having previous knowledge of the school and the people being observed is that researchers may fail to question what they already think they know and they may fail to achieve a sufficiently deep critique of acquaintances. I hope that being aware of these problems has enabled me to overcome them as far as possible.

As this is a longitudinal case study it is intended that the data collected over the three years should be considered as a whole for most purposes but separated into year groupings when factors such as change over time are being considered. Longitudinal studies enable researchers to view social life as a continuous process rather than in static terms and so appreciate the

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factors which instigate change (Bryman, 1988, p.65). Whilst ethnographic studies cannot provide conclusive evidence for cause-and-effect processes, the analysis can provide evidence as to why the researcher believes that particular changes have produced particular effects. Longitudinal studies can also facilitate a deeper relationship with the participants and so enable a researcher to gain a greater understanding of their perspectives (ibid., p.96). Nias (1991, p.162) believes that the longer the study, the more time this allows for ideas to germinate in the researcher's mind, which lessens the risk of the conclusions being the result of short-term influences.

Long-term studies can be justified in terms of checking the reliability and the consistency of the data (Walker, 1993, p.163). An important source of clues concerning the underlying intertextuality of Ms. Bright's SATs discourse was the series of in-depth interviews which I carried out with her and these were subsequently transcribed. The advantage of carrying out a total of 44 interviews is that they can be used to triangulate each other. It was inevitable that I would ask the same or similar questions a number of times during these series of unstructured interviews and this enabled comparisons to be made of Ms. Bright's comments at different times. The interview data was also triangulated by evidence from written texts such as the Reading Assessment Records and the audio-recordings of the SATs. As most of the interviews were of short duration they did not present an unwarranted imposition upon her time.

Table 15.1: Yearly total of reading tasks and teacher interviews

| YEAR | READING TASKS | TEACHER INTERVIEWS |
|------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1997 | 18            | 17                 |
| 1998 | 23            | 15                 |
| 1999 | 16            | 12                 |
|      | <b>57</b>     | <b>44</b>          |

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In 1997 and 1998 the reading tasks were carried out at an average rate of one per day over a period of several weeks. Owing to my work commitments elsewhere, I was unable to be present when they were taking place but used audio cassette recordings made by Ms. Bright. The interviews took place after school, usually in Ms. Bright's classroom but occasionally in other places such as the staff room. I endeavoured to interview her within a few days of each SAT being recorded and the usual procedure was for me to call at the school, interview her, and collect any audio cassettes of SATs which had been carried out since my last visit.

The disadvantage of not being present during the SATs was that I did not have access to the non-verbal behaviour on the part of teacher or pupil, other than that obtained from the teacher's notes or from the interviews. However, this did not appear to be too great an obstacle as the SATs took place in a relatively fixed physical context - the pupil stood by the teacher whilst they read from the same book and this close physical proximity enhanced the quality of the audio-recordings. The use of recordings made by others is not uncommon in discourse analysis. Jarvis and Robinson (1997, p.215) state that they were not present for all the audio-recordings used in their study and Young (1992, p.80) cites a study by Gambley in which the recordings were made solely by teachers. Stierer (1995, p.348) was not present when the conferences between a single pupil and a teacher took place but was able to analyse the interactions "because of the accessibility and clarity of the recorded examples." Swann and Graddol (1994, p.154) carried out discourse analysis on a video-taped classroom sequence which "was recorded by colleagues at the Open University for other research purposes".

Not being present when the 1997 and 1998 reading SATs were being conducted had certain advantages as well as disadvantages. The 'researcher effect' was minimised as the only people present when each SAT took place were the teacher and the pupil. In these circumstances, the ecological validity of the audio-taped data is likely to be high. Nevertheless, if the researcher is present s/he is able to note non-verbal data which would otherwise have to

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be obtained by asking the teacher after the event, which relies both on the teacher's memory and the researcher realising that some significant non-verbal event has occurred. Also, although this study is centred on the discourses which influenced the teacher, I wished to interview the pupils to gain an insight into their perspectives on the SATs. Therefore, in 1999 the head teacher agreed to provide cover for Ms. Bright so that she was able to take four SATs on four morning sessions. This enabled me to observe all the SATs except one (the pupil was absent) and to interview the children.

In order to reduce any reaction to my presence during the SATs I had previously spent three mornings in the classroom observing, talking to the children, helping groups or individuals with their work and hearing them read. The children were used to adults other than teachers in the classroom, as the school used pupils from the local comprehensive school and parents as helpers, so the children did not appear to regard my presence as unusual. I believe these sessions were useful because the children knew who I was and showed no obvious signs of being either surprised or concerned when I observed them during their reading SATs.

As this differed from my data gathering methods in previous years it could be argued that my presence may have produced minor changes in the behaviour of Ms. Bright or the pupils. Yet even if the data does reflect some variation due to differences in collection, this does not inevitably invalidate it. In ethnographic research, unlike quantitative studies, it is neither necessary nor possible for all the participants to be observed in similar contexts. People may make subtle distinctions between contexts and this may produce different kinds of behaviour (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.51) and the ability to record and analyse such differentiation is an important aspect of qualitative research. What is important is that any such variation is recognised as possibly being due to differences in data collection and not to something inherent in the situation or in the subjectivities of the participants.



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The transformation of pupil-teacher dialogue into transcripts is not the straightforward, mechanical, neutral task that it might appear. Ochs (1999, p.167) points out that audio recordings do not remove the problem of selective observation but merely delay it until the time of transcription. Swann (1994, p.39) maintains that "a transcript is already an interpretation of the event it seeks to record" and even inserting punctuation entails a compromise between comprehensibility and creating a premature and impressionistic account of the data (ibid.) Therefore, transcription is perhaps best considered as a form of observation in which the researcher's assumptions interact with what actually took place.

The decision as to how much detail should be included in the transcripts is a matter of nice judgement. If too little is supplied then it is difficult for the reader to reconstruct the context but if too many details are given, then transcripts become difficult to follow (Ochs, 1999, p.168) and more inferences need to be made by the transcriber. Factors such as tone of voice, emphasis and rising inflection (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1999, pp.160-162) are particularly difficult to describe as these may necessitate making assumptions about the speaker's intentions. The transcription style used in this report endeavours to offer a compromise between detail and clarity but, as with all aspects of all reports, it presents a greatly simplified version of what actually occurred. Nevertheless, the intention is to portray the most salient aspects of the pupil-teacher interactions and provide sufficient evidence for the reader to assess the validity of the interpretations.

I listened to tape recordings of all 57 reading SATs which were carried out by Ms. Bright over the three years and of these fifteen were selected for transcription and detailed analysis. The selection criteria were:

- (i) Either three girls and two boys, or three boys and two girls from each year so as to provide a total of either eight girls and seven boys, or eight boys and seven girls.

## CHAPTER 15: SOURCES OF DATA

(ii) A different reading book for each pupil.

(iii) One pupil achieving grade 2A, one achieving 2B, one achieving 2C and one achieving Grade 1 from each year. The fifth pupil from each year to be chosen so as to maintain a comparable number of pupils achieving grades 2A, 2B, 2C and 1. (In the Key Stage 1 reading SATs, 2A is the highest level, followed by 2B and then 2C. Below these grades are level 1, which is not differentiated into A, B and C categories. Pupils who are expected to achieve a higher grade than 2A take a written test rather than the oral reading task.)

Table 15.2: Details of SATs selected for transcription

| YEAR | SEX  | NAME     | BOOK TITLE                       | GRADE |
|------|------|----------|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1997 | Girl | Samantha | Eat up Gemma                     | 2A    |
| 1997 | Boy  | Errol    | Billy's Beetle                   | 2A    |
| 1997 | Girl | Shirley  | Duncan's Tree House              | 2B    |
| 1997 | Boy  | John     | Pizza                            | 2C    |
| 1997 | Boy  | Nigel    | Finish the Story Dad             | 1     |
| 1998 | Girl | Shefali  | Wish You Were Here               | 2A    |
| 1998 | Girl | Anne     | The Toymaker                     | 2B    |
| 1998 | Girl | Sonia    | Once There Were Giants           | 2B    |
| 1998 | Boy  | George   | Seagull                          | 2C    |
| 1998 | Boy  | Wesley   | Tom's Cat                        | 1     |
| 1999 | Boy  | Trevor   | Schnitzel Von Krumm's Basketwork | 2A    |
| 1999 | Boy  | Alan     | The Snow Lambs                   | 2B    |
| 1999 | Girl | Olwen    | The Stars                        | 2C    |
| 1999 | Girl | Shobna   | Not Like That, Like This         | 1     |
| 1999 | Girl | Maria    | Dinosaur Dreams                  | 1     |

These procedures appeared to produce a reasonably varied selection of SATs as I wish to investigate whether the teacher's questions were of a similar type or merely reflected the particular reading book the pupil had chosen. In ethnographic studies, if generalisations are to be made within the case then the chosen instances need to be representative of the situation as a whole

## CHAPTER 15: SOURCES OF DATA

(Schofield, 1993, p.105). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, pp.45-6) and Ball (1993, p.37) suggest that data in ethnographic studies should be selected methodically and Boyd-Barrett warns of “attempts to characterize texts through unsystematic sampling and analyzing of particular segments” (1994, p.38). Stake (1995, p.109) believes that researchers have ethical obligations both to those being researched and to the research community, to avoid misrepresentations and minimise the possibility of misunderstandings.

The selection of SATs for detailed analysis could only be done after the event as I could not know in advance which book the pupils would choose or what grade they would be awarded. I selected these in May after all the SATs for a particular year had been completed. I transcribed the chosen SATs between late May and early July each year so that if I needed further information from Ms. Bright she would be in a better position to remember what had happened. I also used these interviews to ask more general questions, as the slow process of transcription proved to be a fertile seed bed for ideas which were substantiated, adapted or rejected as additional data was obtained.

### CHAPTER 16 THE ANALYSIS

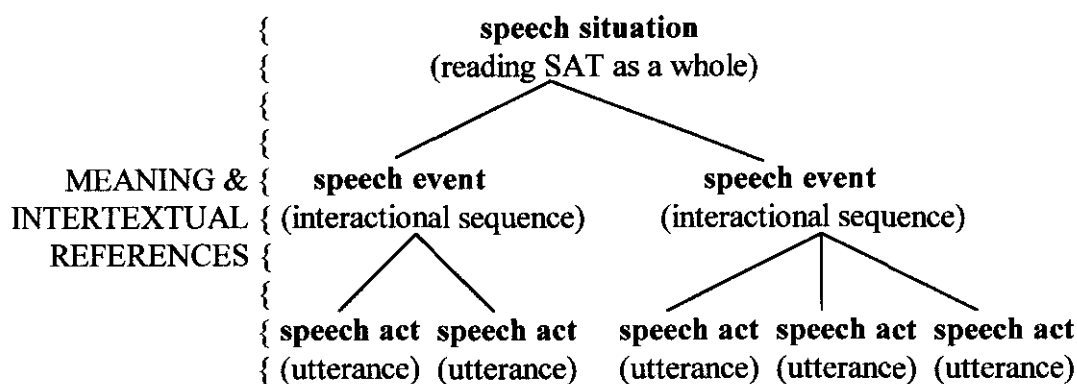
In 1977 Del Hymes published an article, 'Toward Ethnographies of Communication', in which he sought to integrate ethnographic and linguistic approaches to data collection and analysis (Hymes, reprinted 1994). Hymes' work built upon the ethnographic studies of Malinowski who emphasized that language can only be understood by considering the context in which it is uttered and by the functions which it serves (Malinowski, 1994, p.6). Malinowski believed that language is essentially a mode of action rather than an instrument of reflection (ibid., p.10) and that its social purpose is to achieve the goals of the interlocutors. Hymes (1994, pp.15-16) suggests that discourse can be analysed in terms of *speech acts* which are the smallest units which represent a particular function. Stubbs (1983, p.53) developed Hymes' work by stressing that utterances are usually multifunctional, although it may be possible to rank the functions in order of importance. Stubbs tends to use the terms *speech act* and *utterance* interchangeably although technically a speech act is the "functional intention of an utterance" (Nunan, 1993, p.124).

Speech acts combine to form a *speech event* which Hymes defines as "activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech" (1994, p.15). Speech events combine to form a *speech situation* which is an activity which in some way is bounded or integral. In terms of the present study, a speech act is equivalent to a particular utterance, a speech event to an interactional sequence such as a group of question and answers, and the speech situation to a whole SAT. The elasticity of the terms *speech act* and *speech event* is due to the fact that the interpretation of meaning is a continuous process and so rigid definitions may be inappropriate to describe rapidly changing contexts. Researchers must use the same contextualisation cues that are available to the participants (Bloome and Egan-Robertson, 1993, p.314). Kamberelis and Scott (1992,

p.375) believe that provided *utterances* are not being used for quantitative purposes and are regarded as being capable of containing more than one *voice*, it will make little difference to the findings of a study on intertextuality whether a continuous piece of text is described as one utterance or two.

Volosinov (1986, p.96) emphasizes that because utterances are “the real units that make up the stream of language-speech” they are part of the language which surrounds them and so lack definite beginnings and endings. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993, p.328) maintain that in order to understanding intertextual meanings more than one level of analysis must be considered, as is indicated in Figure 16.1

Figure 16.1: Levels of analysis in a reading SAT  
[Hymes’ (1994) terms in bold print.]



The analysis of the present project began by selecting six of the fifteen transcribed SATs which were listed in Table 15.2. These six were chosen at random with the proviso that there should be a girl and boy from each year. They were then divided into speech acts. I worked on the assumption that if people’s utterances have the function of achieving particular goals, as Malinowski argues, then they will use their intertextual resources to accomplish this. Utterances can only be interpreted in the context of the speech events and the speech situations in which they are embedded. Sometimes the speech events and speech situations will provide greater clues to intertextual references than individual utterances.

Having apportioned the transcripts into speech acts, I then analysed each speech act in order to try to discover the main intertextual resources from which it was derived. In order to provide some triangulation for my interpretations I compared them with other texts such as the Teacher's Handbooks, the reading book, hand-written documents such as the Reading Assessment Records, the teacher's discourse during the interviews, and her discourse at other times in the same SAT and in different SATs. I did not attempt to discover all the intertextual references because, as Kamberelis and Scott (1992, p.376) point out, this would have been an impossible task. However, as these authors also point out, this should not prevent researchers from trying to uncover the most salient intertexts (*ibid.*).

The purpose of the categorisation was to provide an answer to the foreshadowed problem of this project which was: "Which are the most salient discourses in a teacher's implementation of the Key Stage 1 Standard Assessment Tasks for reading?" Therefore, I endeavoured to find the discourses which were either present throughout the SATs or which appeared to be dominant in specific circumstances. I tried various kinds of categorisation using an iterative process in which the categories were reformulated, until I reached the point where the analysis was not producing any further changes and few elements were not fitting readily into the existing categories (see Ball, 1991, pp.182-187). I then selected passages from the nine other transcribed SATs either at random or if it seemed they might challenge the existing categorisation, but no further main categories emerged. The evidence for each of these categories will be discussed in chapters 18-22.

One of the main reasons I chose intertextuality as a research tool was that relatively few empirical research studies have been carried out using this method and I felt that it has the potential to provide a different perspective on how reading SATs are carried out. One of its strengths as a research tool is that it can triangulate the findings of studies which have used different

## CHAPTER 16: THE ANALYSIS

methods. For example, the literature review indicated that a considerable number of studies found that teachers regarded the instructions in the handbook as confusing and administered the SATs in varying ways. However, none of these studies used intertextuality as a specific analytic tool and so the present study has the potential to triangulate or question the findings of other studies.

At the same time, it is intended that this project should extend beyond merely supporting or contesting the findings of other studies. Intertextuality is a useful research tool in that it has the potential to facilitate comprehensive and deep analyses, the categorisation of discourses and an explanation of their sources. It can serve a useful function in demonstrating both to educational practitioners and policymakers that no discourse is ever entirely dominant and that if teaching and policymaking are to achieve their goals then it is necessary to understand the nature and workings of other influential discourses.

A familiar problem for ethnographic researchers is the extent to which their findings have arisen from the data or from the theoretical constructs used in the analysis. Whilst Glaser and Strauss (cited Open University, 1996, p.111) advise researchers to suspend their theoretical judgements in order to allow concepts to emerge from the data, in practice this seems almost impossible to achieve. Bryman (1988, p.85) notes that whilst many researchers cite Glaser and Strauss, very few actually carry out their recommendations. Yet if findings are chiefly the result of theoretical constructs rather than being grounded in the data, the whole process of empirical research may appear spurious. The emphasis in this project was upon data-driven rather than theory-driven categorisation (Walter and Mitchell, 1990, p.282) as the categories emerged from the data according to theoretical perspectives rather than theoretical perspectives dictating which data would be collected. It should be added that in practice, data collection and theoretical perspectives are always intertwined and the findings of a study are derived from their interaction.

The SATs transcriptions were treated as primary data and, where appropriate, the analysis endeavoured to discover Ms. Bright's main intertexts. All other data, including the teacher interviews, reading assessment records, and printed material were regarded as secondary data which could be used to assist in the analysis of the SATs discourses.

*The findings of this project are the result of subjecting 'real life' data to the analytic tools and theories which have been discussed earlier in this paper. Inevitably, these will reflect values and ideologies but this is true of any discourse, not merely that of educational research. Yet this does not mean that the data is irredeemably contaminated or that all findings will be of equally dubious value. Phillips (1993, p.71) maintains that although there is no absolute standard against which educational research can be measured, this does not necessarily imply a relativism whereby all arguments should be accorded equal merit. He suggests that educational research should be evaluated by the "critical tradition" in which studies are examined, debated and assessed by other educationalists (ibid., p.66). This is not a foolproof method as the critics may suffer from the same misconceptions as the researcher but in a world of uncertainty it is likely to be the best kind of validity which can be attained.*

It is salutary to remember that all research, including one's own, is essentially an argument in which the researcher attempts to provide the best possible explanations for what has been observed whilst appreciating that they are unlikely to be either complete or unproblematic. Therefore, the following analyses are intended as heuristics for interpreting a teacher's use of intertextuality during reading SATs rather than as conclusive judgements.



### **PART D: FINDINGS**

#### **CHAPTER 17**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS SECTION**

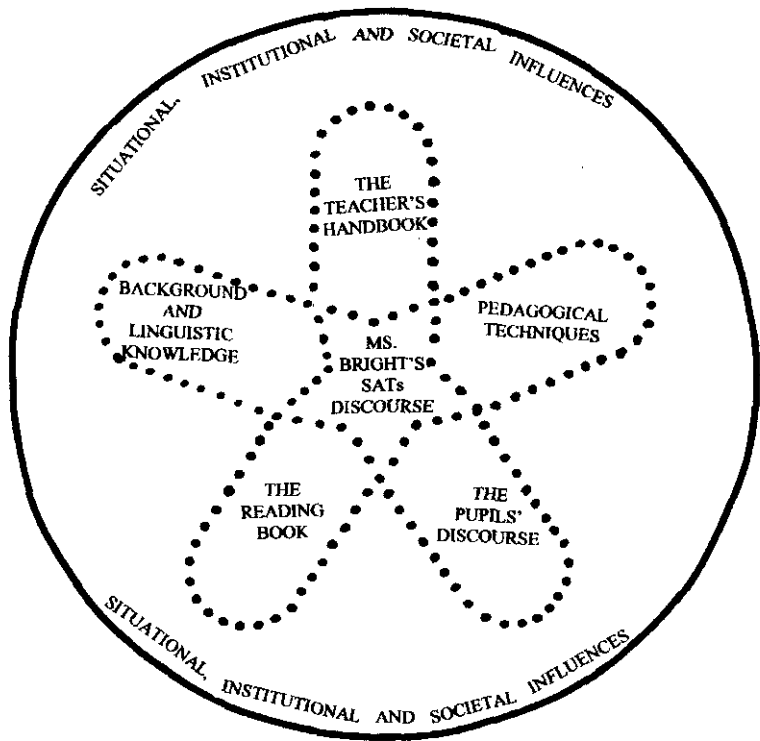
The five major categories listed below emerged from the analytic procedures which were discussed in the previous chapter. These discourses were salient throughout the SATs and evidence for this will be discussed in the following chapters. It should be emphasized that the categories operated interactively and that their separation is for analytic purposes rather than to represent the actual processes. The main intertextual sources which Ms. Bright used during reading SATs were:

- Her interpretation of the Teacher's Handbook
- Pedagogical techniques
- The pupil's discourse
- The reading book
- Background and linguistic knowledge

Situational, institutional and societal factors (Fairclough, 1989, p.25) also influenced Ms. Bright's discourse during the SATs. It was argued throughout the Literature Review that discourses cannot be considered in isolation but are always mediated by local and global factors. However, Gilbert warns of:

the perennial problem of incorporating into the analysis of particular events, sites and actions an understanding of their broader social contexts (1992, p.37)

Figure 17.1: Ms. Bright’s main intertextual resources during the SATs (dotted lines indicate permeable boundaries between the categories)



Whilst it is my profound belief that social structures have an enormous influence on the discourse of individuals, it is difficult to use detailed empirical data to support societal theories because the data is often capable of other, equally plausible, explanations. Therefore, my inability to establish that certain aspects of Ms. Bright’s SATs discourse were directly linked to societal influences should not be taken to imply that these are inconsequential but that the chain is too long and too convoluted to provide sufficient satisfactory evidence.

Although a completely satisfactory solution to this problem would be difficult to achieve, there are certain ways in which it can be ameliorated. Shilling (1992, p.4) maintains that social structures are not constraining

## CHAPTER 17: INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS SECTION

forces which lie beyond individuals but are implicated and reproduced in social interactions. Their continuation depends upon this interpersonal reproduction and human agents are responsible for continuing or changing these structures. By investigating the discourse of individuals, an understanding of social structures can be achieved.

Gilbert (ibid., p.38) also argues that by analysing the resources, forms and constraints which are present in particular discursal situations, insights may be gained into how the societal context influences people's language. In the Findings section, I have used the concept of *intertextuality* to show some of the ways in which social structures may have influenced the discourse of Ms. Bright and her pupils. One example of this would be the statutory testing of Year 2 pupils in England and Wales, as the prescriptive procedures of the SATs set the agenda for their discourse. I have also attempted to describe and analyse some of the ways in which Ms. Bright and the pupils demonstrated their agency, which suggests that their discourse was not wholly determined by social structures. In the following chapters, it is my intention to indicate some of the ways in which:

the social construction of *intertextuality* can emphasize the interactional work that people do in local events to invoke broader social, cultural, and political contexts. (Bloome and Egan-Robertson, 1992, p.331)

## **CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK**

### **CHAPTER 18**

#### **MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK**

It was argued in Chapter 12 that the SAT handbooks contain a mixture of instructions, suggestions and advice which produce quite considerable variations in the ways in which teachers carried them out. Therefore, the crucial factor in determining their influence on Ms. Bright's discourse did not depend upon their actual wording but upon how she interpreted them. Ms. Bright said she had read the handbooks and continued to use them for reference, and in the interviews she appeared to be familiar with their contents. Excerpt 18.1 shows an example of this during an interview concerning the grade she gave to a pupil.

#### **Excerpt 18.1: from interview with Ms. Bright on 29/04/97**

Ms. Bright: ...and also I gave Carol 2C because she was very hesitant as well. She's not very fluent.

APL: Is this your own interpretation?

Ms. Bright: No, this is the guidelines, I'm following the guidelines.

Whether Ms. Bright's interpretation of the handbook was 'correct' is not the point at issue but rather the effect that this had upon her intertextual resources. She regarded the handbook as an authoritative guide and endeavoured to carry out the procedures according to what she believed were the authors' intentions:

#### **Excerpt 18.2: from interview with Ms. Bright on 07/05/98**

APL: Do you have to keep checking up with the handbooks then to see what's happening?

Ms. Bright: I have, when I'm doing something, to keep reading them through to make sure I'm doing the right thing. Yes, as I go along.

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

APL: Is it difficult for you to remember everything?

Ms. Bright: Well it is and each year they vary slightly. If you haven't read the book or skimmed through the book thinking you know, you could have missed something.

Effectively, she had little choice other than to try to carry out the instructions, as the SATs are a legal requirement and the head teacher had delegated the responsibility of implementing all the Key Stage 1 SATs onto her. Further evidence that the handbook was a major influence on her SATs discourse can be derived from the following transcript.

### Transcript 18.1: from Samantha's SAT. She was reading "Eat Up, Gemma"

(Hayes, 1989) which is the story of a baby who refused to eat her meals

98 Ms. Bright: So what do you think's going to happen next in the story then?

99 Poor old Gemma's not eating her food, is she? What do you  
100 think's going to happen?

101 Samantha: Don't know really.

102 Ms. Bright: Don't know really. Why do you think she's not eating her food?

103 Samantha: Because perhaps she doesn't feel very well.

104 Ms. Bright: She might not be feeling very well, yes, she might not feel very  
105 well. Does your little brother not eat his food sometimes?

106 Samantha: No, he goes eeeekkkk!

107 Ms. Bright: Turns his face away.

108 Samantha: Yeah.

109 Ms. Bright: And he won't have it. Yes they do that kind of thing don't they,  
110 babies?

111 Samantha: And when he eats a jacket potato and last night a lady came  
112 round to see Mummy and Jason [*Samantha's brother*] wanted  
113 a piggy back from me and I gave him one.

114 Ms. Bright: I see. I see, { yes.

115 Samantha: { So I've been giving him piggy backs to get him to  
116 sleep nearly --

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

- 117 Ms. Bright: That's good.
- 118 Samantha: When Mum's not --
- 119 Ms. Bright: So what's Gemma doing with all her food? She gave some to the  
120 dog, she gave some to the birds, and what about the grapes?
- 121 Samantha: She squashed them all up.
- 122 Ms. Bright: She's playing with it really, she not really eating it {she's playing
- 123 Samantha: { Yeah
- 124 Ms. Bright: with it all, isn't she?
- 125 Samantha: Then a little boy, he was swinging on a tree.
- 126 Ms. Bright: Yes, he's eaten his dinner up, he's having a nice time but  
127 Gemma's not eating hers up, is she, at all? OK, I'm going to read  
128 the rest of the book to you now and then we can make some little  
129 comments as we go along. You can help me read it if you like.

Key: -- interruption by another speaker

{yes

{So overlapping speech

The influence of the QCA/SCAA documents on Ms. Bright's discourse is evident throughout the structure and content of the reading SATs. Transcript 18.1 indicated that she followed the instructions to:

... initiate a discussion during which the child is given the opportunity to respond to the book so far. To gather evidence of the child's understanding and response to the book, you might ask a range of questions to encourage the child to talk about the meaning and significance of what he or she has read. (SCAA, 1996, p.14)

Ms. Bright was also instructed to: "Make brief notes of the child's responses on the Reading Assessment Record" (ibid., p.15). A photocopy of Samantha's Reading Assessment Record is included in the Appendix and amongst the written comments Ms. Bright made about her performance

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

were: "Talked about her baby brother and how he threw food about etc." and "Enjoyed book and able to offer ideas of her own and incidents from her own life". The Reading Assessment Records help to triangulate Ms. Bright's interview data and her discourse during the SATs. Their format is also likely to act as another source of QCA/SCAA direction of what she should assess during the SATs because headings such as "interest and involvement", "retelling, prediction" and "personal response to the book" complement the handbook's instructions cited above.

The questions asked by Ms. Bright were similar to the example questions in the handbook, such as when she asked Samantha: "So what do you think's going to happen next in the story then?" (line 98) this echoed the example question "How do you think the story will end?" (SCAA, 1996, p.14) and the advice to "talk about what might happen later in the book" (ibid., p.14). Ms. Bright asked a similar question at least once in each SAT.

The ways in which Ms. Bright transformed the instructions in the handbook into her own words when she was telling the pupils about SAT procedures could be described as an example of Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse, which is the assimilation of the language of others into one's own speech (see Chapter 5). Transcript 18.2 indicates that she converted some of the instructions from pages 10-14 of the Teacher's Handbook (QCA, 1998) into a form which she intended to be understood by six-year-old Alan. As such, her utterances are neither completely her own nor a reproduction of the text but represent a mingling of the two, in which both 'voices' are recognizable:

### Transcript 18.2: from the beginning of Alan's SAT

- 3 Ms. Bright: ... we're going to have a go at reading it together and any words  
4 that you don't know, I'd like you to have a go at sounding out or  
5 having a guess at and if you're stuck I'll help you. And when we  
6 get to a certain part of the book, I'm going to ask you to read  
7 some pages all on your own and while you're doing that I've got

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

8 a little sheet here where I tick because I've got the same words  
9 on my sheet. OK? And we're going to get lots and lots of ticks  
10 on here, aren't we? And if you come across any words you don't  
11 know sound them out or have a guess at what you think they  
12 might mean and if you're really stuck I'll help you, OK, but we'll  
13 see how hard we can try.

When Ms. Bright's discourse is compared with the text of the handbook, it is apparent that she endeavoured to transform an imperative, impersonal style into a more friendly, co-operative style which was addressed personally to Alan. The handbook instructed her to:

Find the appropriate source sheet for the running record passage. Use one box on the running record overlay for each word in the passage.

During the reading, mark the running record as follows:

...(QCA, 1998, p.14)

Ms. Bright described "the appropriate source sheet for the running record passage" as "a little sheet here where I tick because I've got the same words on my sheet". This was phrased in language which a child could understand and as this was a face to face conversation she was able to use the deictic "here" to indicate the sheet. One of the differences between written and spoken discourse is that the former tends to use more explicit, decontextualised language in order to avoid ambiguity whereas the latter makes greater use of contextual references and shared knowledge between the interlocutors.

It was argued in Chapter 12 that the handbook often uses imperatives which lack the modifiers which could be introduced if pronouns were used. In the above passage, the handbook directs teachers to "Find the appropriate source sheet" rather than using less direct forms such as "[You will need to] or [You will find it helpful to] find the appropriate source sheet." This can be



## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

contrasted with Ms. Bright's discourse where she made the instructions personal to Alan by using "you" on eleven occasions. She also softened the instructions by employing terms such as "I'd like you to have a go" (line 4) and "I'm going to ask you" (line 6) rather than presenting them as blunt imperatives. The use of "I" on seven occasions indicates personal involvement by Ms. Bright, whereas the instructions in the handbook contain no first person pronouns or any reference to its authors.

Ms. Bright also used "we" on six occasions which might suggest that the SAT was a joint enterprise, particularly as she said, "we're going to get lots and lots of ticks on here, aren't we" and "we'll see how hard we can try". The term *we* can indicate a shared experience (Mercer, 1995, pp.33-34) but Ms. Bright's and Alan's roles reflect differences in status, as the former is the examiner and the latter the examinee. Whilst her discourse may have been intended to reassure and encourage Alan, it may also have helped to disguise the fact that he was being formally assessed. A key factor which emerged from the literature review was that particular discourses and genres can reinforce status differences between interlocutors. This process is usually unnoticed by the participants as language is commonly regarded as being both natural and neutral and this disguises its ideological effects.

Bakhtin (1981, p.342) distinguishes between authoritarian and internally persuasive discourses and the style of the Teacher's Handbook might suggest that it is authoritarian in nature. Yet Ms. Bright's interpretation was far more complex than can be expressed in a simple dichotomy. She regarded certain sections as authoritarian in Bakhtin's (ibid., p.342) sense that they did not allow other discourses to influence them and she made no concessions to contextual factors such as the ability of the children or their attitude towards the SAT. However, in other aspects of the SATs, she appeared to regard the instructions in the handbooks as being advisory rather than mandatory and so adapted them to suit the circumstances. This finding is consistent with the discussion in Chapter 5 which maintained that Bakhtin's emphasis on

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

dichotomies failed to consider the complexity and variety of the discourses which readers use to interpret a text.

The dominance of the SAT handbook as an authoritarian text which would not permit the intrusion of any other discourse was particularly noticeable when Ms. Bright was allocating grades. George's result provides an example of this, as I thought his performance in the discussions with Ms. Bright was remarkable for a seven-year-old. He was highly knowledgeable, articulate, and able to relate the text of the book to things he had personally observed or had seen on television or in other books:

Transcript 18.3: Ms. Bright was asking George about the passage he had just read in the non-fiction book 'Seagull' (Savage, 1995)

- 347 Ms. Bright: So does she lay all the eggs at the same time?  
348 George: No. She lays them every day.  
349 Ms. Bright: She lays one each day, yes. How many eggs does she lay?  
350 George: Three.  
351 Ms. Bright: Three, that's right.  
352 George: Not much like a golden eagle, they only lay two.  
353 Ms. Bright: Yes, some birds only lay one don't they, some birds lay two and  
354 some lay lots, don't they?  
355 George: Yes.  
356 Ms. Bright: A little wren lays lots and lots of eggs and robins lay lots don't  
357 they? Blackbirds can lay quite a few, can't they?  
358 George: And butterflies they lay hundreds.  
359 Ms. Bright: They lay hundreds don't they?  
360 George: Thousands. And ants.

The above transcript was typical of George's SAT in that he answered the questions derived from the book quickly and confidently and then moved the conversation on to topics not mentioned in the book, in this case the number of eggs laid by golden eagles, butterflies and ants. Other examples of George's general knowledge were that grass snakes like to eat birds' eggs,

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

sharks may present a danger to seagulls in California, the local reservoir is a good place to observe seagulls, various birds of prey might present a danger to eggs and chicks, the difference between a nest and a roost, and that seagulls are daring and acrobatic fliers as he had seen one dive into the compactor at the local refuse disposal unit and fly out with food in its beak.

Only on one occasion did Ms. Bright have to give George a clue to a question and that was when he confused the name of the publisher with that of the author. Further evidence for his enthusiasm is contained in comments Ms. Bright made on his Reading Assessment Record sheet:

Very involved and interested in the book as he enjoyed  
[sic] any non-fiction material...Discussed this and other  
non-fiction read recently. Added additional information  
about books throughout. Able to discuss facts etc.  
Responded very well to the book and illustrations. Enjoyed  
it tremendously.

Despite the exceptional nature of George's performance he was only awarded grade 2C. Ms. Bright indicated that the reason for this was that he made eight mistakes on the running record.

### Excerpt 18.3: from interview with Ms. Bright on 13/05/98

Ms. Bright: He [George] performed outstandingly but by the rules it goes on the number of mistakes they make.

APL: There's no flexibility then in the SAT procedures?

Ms. Bright: They don't allow for that, no, they don't allow for that.

APL: So there's no allowance given for enthusiasm, then? In the SATs handbook though it does say that you shouldn't allow any single criterion to be a hurdle for a grade.

Ms. Bright: No but then they give these rules, the rules are if they get more than ten mistakes you can't give them the level. And if they get,

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

you know, between a certain number then it's 2B and if they get one more you've got to give them 2C, you know, this sort of thing and they can't have 2A unless they're perfect."

The factor influencing Ms. Bright's decision on grading appeared to be the handbook's instruction that in order for a pupil to be awarded grade 2A "the reading of the passage was accurate" (SCAA, 1996, p.17) which she interpreted as scoring 99 or 100% on the running record. (Further evidence for this occurs in Excerpts 18.12 and 18.13 and the subsequent discussion.)

George's was not an isolated case as Ms. Bright wrote on John's Reading Assessment Record sheet that:

He enjoyed the funny pictures and the book overall - he was positive about all aspects of the book. Answered questions well.

Nevertheless, John was also graded 2C as, according to his Reading Assessment Record, he made seven errors on the running record passage, so giving him a score of 93%.

### Excerpt 18.4: from interview with Ms. Bright on 06/05/97

APL: Why did you give him *[John]* 2C then?

Ms. Bright: Because he got 94% *[sic]* on the running total...

This suggests that the pupil's involvement, interest and enthusiasm for the book are subordinate influences which do not affect the authoritative discourse that grades are determined by the number of errors on the running record. The comments in the interviews and on the Reading Assessment Record sheets indicate that Ms. Bright was aware that the numerical scores were not the only criteria for assessing a pupil's performance during a SAT and that enjoyment of the book was a relevant attribute. Yet she felt that she had to grade the children according to her interpretation of the instructions in

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

the handbook. This is consistent with the argument in Part B that although people may be aware of alternative discourses this does not mean that they can or will use them.

Ms. Bright endeavoured to carry out the SATs according to her interpretation of the handbook's instructions and despite searching through the transcripts and my observational notes I was unable to find any instances where she transgressed any of these on a regular basis. However, in three of the fifteen transcribed SATs she ignored the handbook's instructions to:

Ask the child to look at the selection of three or four books  
you made from the appropriate booklist...and to choose  
one of them. (QCA, 1998, p.10)

On these occasions Ms. Bright gave the children a book she had chosen for them rather than allowing them to make their own choice. The reasons for this appeared to vary. According to Ms. Bright, Nigel had been given *Finish the Story, Dad* (Smee, 1991) because he had previously read *Seagull* (Savage, 1995) for his SAT but had made fourteen errors on the running record. Ms. Bright felt that Nigel's performance did not reflect his ability:

### Excerpt 18.5: from interview with Ms. Bright on 28/04/97

Ms. Bright: I just thought he failed because that [*Seagull*] was a particularly hard book... I would have put him at a level 2, a poor level 2 but certainly level 2 not level 1. He was far above what you'd expect, exceeded a level 1.

In an earlier interview, Ms. Bright had said that contrary to the views expressed in the Teacher's Handbook (SCAA, 1996, p.10) children found it easier to read certain books on the list:

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

### Excerpt 18.6: from interview with Ms. Bright on 23/04/97

Ms. Bright: Well really they're supposed to be the same [*level of difficulty*].

APL: Yes.

Ms. Bright: So you're not really supposed to take it into account. What I have done, a couple of stories [*books*] I thought were very difficult I haven't used them.

Therefore, she decided to do Nigel's reading SAT again, using *Finish the Story, Dad* as she believed that this was one of the easier books on the list. However, her optimism proved to be unfounded as Nigel made thirteen errors on the running record and received the level 1 grade.

This event suggests that Ms. Bright used various tactics in order to assist her pupils to do well in the SATs but tried to avoid transgressing what she believed to be important aspects of the handbooks' instructions. The 1997 Teacher's Handbook (SCAA, 1996, p.10) did not give any advice on what teachers should do if they felt that a child had underachieved on the reading task and did not stipulate that a child could not retake a SAT. Therefore, in the absence of instructions to the contrary, Excerpt 18.5 suggests that Ms. Bright believed re-taking the SAT was justified if it enabled Nigel to demonstrate his true potential.

Excerpts 18.5 and 18.6 indicate that Ms. Bright did not use certain books on the list because she felt they were too difficult and might disadvantage her pupils. Nigel was given *Finish the Story, Dad* rather than being allowed to choose for himself because she believed that this was one of the easier books. Ms. Bright felt that she was justified in doing this because the handbook instructed the teacher to select three or four books from the list (QCA, 1997, p.8).

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

### Excerpt 18.7: from interview with Ms. Bright on 21/05/99

APL: Do you feel that the instructions in the handbook say that the children should choose the books for themselves or do you think that's an optional thing in the handbook?

Ms. Bright: In the handbook it does actually ask you not to put too many out...so obviously you put out the books that you think that particular child will be interested in...and if you think the child will do better on the easier books then that's fair enough there's nothing to say you can't and if a child finds the book too difficult, he perhaps wouldn't be interested in it anyway.

Whilst Ms. Bright's account did not explain why she had chosen only one book rather than the three or four stipulated, she may have felt that as the principle of teacher selection had been established in the handbook she was entitled to choose the book that she felt was most appropriate to the child's ability and/or interests.

According to Ms. Bright, Maria had been given *Dinosaur Dreams* (Ahlberg, 1990) because :

### Excerpt 18.8: from interview with Ms. Bright on 14/05/99

Ms. Bright:...it's been on the level 1 list for several years now so this might be its last year and nobody's chosen it yet, perhaps because there hasn't been many level 1s so I thought I ought to use it.

Alan had been given *The Snow Lambs* (Gliori, 1995):

### Excerpt 18.9: from interview with Ms. Bright on 21/05/99.

Ms. Bright: Possibly because I'd heard the other books several times anyway and it was just [laughs] to save me from going round the bend

## CHAPTER 18: MS. BRIGHT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

really [laughs]. Yes, to provide a bit of variety really, yes.

Assuming that Ms. Bright's accounts of her own actions were valid, this suggests that the discourse of the handbook may have been counteracted on occasions by other discourses such as those of tactics, novelty and variety. This may have depended whether she interpreted particular sections of the handbook as being authoritative or open to other discourses. In this instance, she may have regarded the choice of books as being an advisory rather than essential element of the SAT procedures as it did not have to be reported on the Reading Assessment Record sheets. It appears that she did not regard the handbook as being authoritarian throughout but that she considered certain sections to be more open to alternative discourses than others. Yet it is debatable whether this example conforms to Bakhtin's (1981, p.346) description of internally persuasive discourses as being replete with "creativity and productiveness" as Ms. Bright's choice of intertexts was constricted. Although she selected only one book rather than the three or four stipulated, she chose this from the approved list rather than from alternative sources.

During the interviews, such as in Excerpt 18.3, Ms. Bright said that she found some of the instructions in different parts of the SATs handbook to be contradictory. An example of this occurs in the following passage which informs teachers how to finish the SAT after the child has read the running record passage:

### **Completing the session**

To round off the activity, ask the child to finish the reading book. This can be done without teacher support, as it is not part of the assessment. (SCCA, 1996, p.15, bold print as in original)



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Ms. Bright said that she could only complete the Reading Assessment Record satisfactorily if she regarded the child's understanding of the whole book as part of the assessment:

### Excerpt 18.10: from interview with Ms. Bright on 14/05/99

Ms. Bright: And as you have to ask questions about them and the handbook says how did they read this or how did they read that or what was their understanding, well you can get a better idea if you've heard them read it. It is part of the assessment because it's the understanding of the book, isn't it?

APL: Yes.

Ms. Bright: That's typical of people who are writing something and not thinking it through really. And also on the [*Reading Assessment Record*] sheet that you fill in, you couldn't fill in that sheet having heard just a few pages.

I also found the handbook to be equivocal on this point. A possible reason why the latter part of the reading book does not form part of the assessment may be the QCA's desire to reduce the amount of essential teacher involvement on the most time-consuming of the Key Stage 1 SATs (see Chapter 11). Yet in *Eat Up, Gemma* (Hayes, 1988) the running record section is completed by page 11 but the example question: "What do you think the lady in the church said to Gemma?" (SCAA, 1996, p.14) can only be answered by reading pages 14-17. Similarly, the example question: "Were there really giants in 'Once There Were Giants?'" (ibid., p.15) can only be answered by six- and seven-year-old children if they read to the end of the story although the running record passage occurs halfway through the book. It also appears somewhat incongruous to label one section of the examples: "Questions about the book as a whole" (ibid., p.14) if the latter part of the book does not form part of the assessment. In addition, the Reading Assessment Record sheets require teachers to complete a section entitled: "relevant comments on: the book as a whole....".

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Ms. Bright always finished the book with the child and continued to ask questions which formed part of her assessment. Evidence for this is obtained from the Reading Assessment Records which contain comments such as:

### Passage 18.1: from Nigel's Reading Assessment Record Sheet

He [*Nigel*] realised that Ruby [*a character in the book*]  
was dreaming and the animals imaginary and that falling in  
dream was significant with falling out of bed.

As some of these events occur at the end of the book, this indicates that Nigel's understanding of the story was continuing to be assessed after the running record passage had been completed.

The fact that Ms. Bright found sections of the Handbook confusing and ambivalent is not surprising, considering that a recurrent theme in Part B was that people use a multiplicity of discourses to interpret a text and this prevents it from having a single meaning. This ambiguity is equally true of the children's responses to Ms. Bright's questions and raises doubts about any testing procedure which requires pupils to interpret written texts in a similar way to their examiners.

According to the 1997 (p.17), 1998 (p.19) and 1999 (p.19) Teacher's Handbooks, in order to be awarded Grade 2A the pupil's reading of the running record passage must be "accurate". However, teachers are encouraged to avoid "using a single element as a 'hurdle' for the award of a level or a grade" (1997, p.16; 1998 p.18; 1999, p.18). I was particularly interested in why Ms. Bright had awarded certain grades to pupils and this was the most frequent question I asked during the interviews. She said that for most children the evaluations on the Reading Assessment Records were unnecessary as what really mattered was their score on the running record:

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Excerpt 18.11: from interview with Ms. Bright on 14/04/97

Ms. Bright: ...because in the end you actually, although you have to fill in this form [*the Reading Assessment Record*] and ask them questions in the end it's all down to them [*the pupils*]. They only get the mark if they get so many words right on the running total.

APL: Yes.

Ms. Bright: So if it wasn't being monitored [laughs] you could just ignore those [*Reading Assessment Record*] sheets totally.

This was borne out by her actual grading as no pupil who made more than one error was awarded grade 2A and no pupil who made more than five errors was awarded grade 2B, as Table 18.1, on the following page, indicates. (The individual grades for each child are given in Table A.1 in the Appendix).

Ms. Bright based her criteria for grading on her interpretations of the instructions and exemplars in the SATs handbooks. Although the 1997 handbook was published by the SCAA and the 1998 and 1999 handbooks by the QCA, they were all very similar in content, as each edition was a slightly revised version of the previous one. There were no significant changes in the instructions on how the tasks were to be implemented during the three years of this study.

In 1998 Ms. Bright made changes to her grading criteria and this appears to have been the result of a minor modification in the Teacher's Handbook. In the examples of children's performance and grading, the 1997 handbook contained seven examples of children who been awarded Level 2 whereas the 1998 handbook contained eight examples, four of which were identical to the 1997 examples whilst the remainder included the new books which had been added to the 1998 list. This might appear to be a relatively minor change but it proved to have significant implications for her decisions on grading.

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Ms. Bright originally adopted similar criteria for grading in 1998 as in the previous year, in that “accurate” meant 99% or 100% on the running record section. In early May of this year all the pupils who had been awarded a Grade 2 on the reading task took the reading test. The results came as a surprise to Ms. Bright because, contrary to her expectations, some pupils had scored considerably higher on the test than on the task. She believed the test was much harder because the pupils had to read the questions as well as the passage and were not allowed to receive any help whatsoever. Therefore, she re-read the SAT handbook and discovered that in one of the new examples (QCA, 1997, p.25) a child had been awarded 2A although he had made two mistakes on the running record.

Table 18.1: Errors on running record and grade awarded

| ERRORS ON<br>RUNNING RECORD | GRADE<br>AWARDED | NUMBER OF<br>PUPILS |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 0                           | 2A               | 12                  |
| 0                           | 2B               | 1                   |
| 1                           | 2A               | 7                   |
| 1                           | 2B               | 1                   |
| 2                           | 2B               | 5                   |
| 3                           | 2B               | 9                   |
| 4                           | 2B               | 4                   |
| 5                           | 2B               | 4                   |
| 6                           | 2C               | 2                   |
| 7                           | 2C               | 2                   |
| 8                           | 2C               | 4                   |
| 9                           | 2C               | 1                   |
| more than 10                | Level 1          | 1                   |

(4 pupils who were expected to make more than 10 errors took the Level 1 SAT.)

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### Excerpt 18.12: from interview with Ms. Bright on 06/05/98

Ms. Bright: Well one or two children particularly with the earlier ones who *did the reading task I did*, I gave them 2B because they made a couple of mistakes on the running record and it did say fluent, you know, no mistakes, but when I read through the booklet again and they gave examples of what other children had done, it actually stated that somebody had been given 2A although they'd made two mistakes or there were two words told and so on.

APL: So you felt you'd been a bit over strict with them?

Ms. Bright: Well I had and I'd gone by originally what they'd said and they said accurate. Well two mistakes is not accurate is it?

APL: You'd interpret accurate as being 100 or 99 per cent?

Ms. Bright: Yes but that wasn't.

APL: What are you going to do? Change the marks then?

Ms. Bright: I shall just look through the ones and those that have only got a couple of mistakes I shall upgrade them to a 2A and use that as my criteria then because that's what they seem to have done, awarded 2As to pupils who have had a couple of mistakes.

Ms. Bright therefore upgraded Erica, Monica and Simon who had all made only two mistakes, from 2B to 2A. As she had already completed their Reading Assessment Records, she decided that she would need to obtain permission for this change from the LEA moderator who was due to visit the school shortly. Yet after discussions with him, Ms. Bright reverted to her original grades as he shared her previous opinion that "accurate" should mean 99% or 100%.

### Excerpt 18.13: from interview with Ms. Bright on 19/05/98

Ms. Bright: I had a word with the moderator and he went through them, actually he went through them and it had to be more or less

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100% for the 2A. I think he would allow one error.

APL: So the moderator would only allow one. But what about the examples in the book?

Ms. Bright: Well I talked about that and he said well the examples in the book don't actually relate to what they're actually telling you in the book because in the book it does say perfect, 100%. To get 2A they should be able to read all the words in the running record so he'd have allowed the odd one because there's an occasional word in the running record you think oh what was that word doing there but it just happened to be that part of the story but no he wouldn't allow any more than that.

APL: So his interpretation in fact had been the same as yours?

Ms. Bright: Yes, the same as mine so he left the gradings as they were.

Stierer and Bloome (1994, p.19) point out that, paradoxically, the term *accuracy* is often used imprecisely: "How accurate does one's reading have to be for it to be considered accurate? Who decides?" They argue (*ibid.*) that the emphasis on accuracy in reading is consistent with a cultural emphasis on precise measurement. This incident demonstrates one of the ways in which societal influences appear to have shaped Ms. Bright's SATs discourse. It was argued in the literature review that individuals cannot avoid incorporating ideological beliefs into their language and that their perspectives of the world are shaped by societal norms.

This incident also emphasizes the dominant influence of the handbook upon the testing procedures as Ms. Bright regarded it as being authoritative but that the LEA moderator as 'expert' could produce a more accurate definition than her own and that he had the power to impose his interpretation, if necessary. It also indicates that even slight alterations in the Teacher's Handbook from year to year can produce quite substantial differences of interpretation by

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teachers, albeit ones which the authors may not have anticipated.

One of the most prominent themes in the literature review was that meanings can never be final, absolute or unambiguous.

### CHAPTER 19

#### PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES

The Teacher's Handbook states that the reading tasks "should be incorporated into normal classroom procedures and routines as far as possible" (QCA, 1997, p.4). Therefore, it is not surprising that the task implementation and Ms. Bright's usual pedagogical practice should have many features in common, although she maintained that the SATs were chiefly concerned with assessing the child's existing knowledge rather than for teaching purposes.

#### Excerpt 19.1: from interview with Ms. Bright on 14/05/97

APL: Did you feel that it [*the reading SAT*] was partly a teaching exercise as well or mainly an assessment one?

Ms. Bright: It was an assessment because although you can encourage the children and talk to them, the aim of the exercise was really to get an assessment at the end of the day rather than just to get them to read and talk about it and words they didn't know and how they were built up and anything like that. There wasn't really time to do that in the assessment that you'd normally do.

Yet a considerable amount of teaching did occur and it will be argued that its type varied according to the particular aspect of the SAT which was taking place.

It was indicated in the previous chapter that Ms. Bright's choice of questions was influenced by the recommendations and example questions. However, the handbook offers no specific guidance as to how the teacher should respond if a child fails to provide what the teacher would regard as an appropriate answer. In these circumstances, Ms. Bright provided the pupils with follow-up questions which usually contained clues to make them easier.



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In Transcript 18.1 when Samantha failed to supply what Ms. Bright deemed to be a suitable response to the general question of what was likely to happen next in the story (line 101), Ms. Bright made the question more specific by asking: “Why do you think she’s not eating her food?”. The clue that the word *food* is salient is suggested by the fact that it comes at the end of the sentence which, in English, is the usual position for new information (Nunan, 1993, p.45).

In addition to rephrasing questions, Ms. Bright also provided clues by using examples from contexts which would be familiar to the child. So when she asked, “Does your little brother not eat his food sometimes?” (line 105), her purpose was to steer Samantha into considering why babies in general might not eat food rather than seeking specific information about her brother.

When Samantha still failed to supply an appropriate answer, in lines 119-120 Ms. Bright resorted to using the pedagogical technique of summarising the relevant events and then asking a specific question, the answer to which should have helped Samantha to solve the more general question. Evidence that these techniques were designed to lead to a goal is provided in lines 122-124 when Ms. Bright summarised Samantha’s contributions into the form of an acceptable answer to the original question in line 98.

Ms. Bright’s use of comprehension-type questions based on the reading book placed her in the position of ‘expert’ and emphasized the status differences between herself and the pupils. If the questions had been about babies in general, Samantha’s knowledge of her baby brother would have made her a more equal partner in the interaction as her personal experiences would have been valuable in themselves rather than being a means of interpreting the reading book. The unequal nature of the pupil-teacher relationship is also indicated by the fact that in the 15 transcribed SATs Ms. Bright asked over 700 questions whilst the pupils asked less than 40. Ms. Bright knew the answers to many of her questions whereas those asked by the pupils usually concerned genuine requests for information. Discourses such as Initiation-

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Response-Feedback can position both teachers and pupils in a hierarchy of power in which teachers can control the discourse and decide what constitutes an appropriate intertext (see Chapter 10).

Ms. Bright controlled the discourse by asking a large number of rhetorical questions with which the pupils, given their subordinate position, had little option but to agree. When Ms. Bright said, “Yes, they do that kind of thing don’t they, babies?” (lines 109-110) although this took the grammatical form of a question, its function was that of a statement which Samantha would find difficult to contradict without challenging Ms. Bright’s background knowledge. Similarly, when Ms. Bright asked, “...she’s not really eating it she’s playing with it all, isn’t she?” (lines 122-124) this functioned as a summary of her interpretation of the story rather than as a question. In lines 126-7 Ms. Bright used another question to provide a summary but did not pause in order to allow Samantha to respond.

Another way in which questioning was used to control the pupils’ discourse was that if Ms. Bright repeated a question, this acted as a cue to the pupils that their previous answer was unsatisfactory and they must try to provide a different one. Although the questions in lines 99-100 and line 102 are similar, Samantha does not provide similar responses and on the second occasion she provided a logical answer, although it was not the one which Ms. Bright was seeking. If a question was followed by another question rather than by praise or confirmation, this usually meant that the pupil had failed to supply a correct or sufficiently detailed answer. This indicates that Ms. Bright and the pupils shared common assumptions about the way in which question and answer discourse should be conducted and this enabled these ‘rules’ to function implicitly.

*It could be argued that Ms. Bright’s pedagogical skills were consistent with the principle of ‘scaffolding’, which was developed by Bruner using ideas from Vygotsky (Mercer, 1994, p.96). The ‘scaffolding’ process involves the child working with a more experienced partner, usually a teacher or a parent,*

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in order to reach an understanding which s/he would not have achieved unassisted. Kirby (1996, p.10) maintains that scaffolding comprises the use of two or more successive questions where the teacher builds upon the child's response. According to this definition, Ms. Bright engaged in a considerable amount of scaffolding during the SATs. Yet her summary of Samantha's responses (lines 122-4) embellished them in order to make them more congruent with her own interpretation of the book. In this case, it appears to be the teacher's ideas which were dominant whereas, according to Edwards and Mercer (1994, p.201), ideally scaffolding should involve a gradual transfer of control from teacher to child. Also, Ms. Bright assessed children on their existing capabilities whereas Vygotsky argued that learning should be directed towards future potential: "the 'buds' or 'flowers' of development rather than the 'fruits' "(Vygotsky, 1994, p.54).

It was argued in Chapters 8 and 9 that a key aspect of successful communication is the ability to judge successfully the amount of knowledge possessed by the other participant(s). Ms. Bright was an experienced teacher and was able to use subtle cues in the pupils' discourse to assess the extent of their knowledge.

### Transcript 19.1: Maria was reading *Dinosaur Dreams* (Ahlberg, 1990)

- 119 Maria: **suddenly the big skeleton is chased []**  
120 Ms. Bright: Mmm  
121 Maria: **by a very big dinosaur. You can't scare me he says You're []**  
122 Ms. Bright: Mmm  
123 Maria: **just a dream. Gr**  
124 Ms. Bright: Good. **Grr!**  
125 Maria: **Grr! growls the dinosaur. Help shouts []**  
126 Ms. Bright: Mmm  
127 Maria: **the big skeleton and he runs away.**

128 Ms. Bright: Good, that's it.

Key: [] pause of 1-4 seconds; **Gr** word read incorrectly

In the above transcript Maria paused on lines 119, 121 and 125 and on each occasion Ms. Bright interpreted this as Maria requiring confirmation that she read the previous word correctly and responded with "Mmm". Maria appears to have regarded this as an endorsement by Ms. Bright and continued reading, although such a sound could be open to a variety of interpretations. In Transcript 19.2, Maria's hesitation was interpreted by Ms. Bright as indicating that she was having difficulty reading a word and she offered assistance. This would support the assertion made in Chapter 10 that teachers and pupils construct implicit rules for classroom interactions.

Transcript 19.2: (ibid.)

271 Maria: **remember this is a []**  
 272 Ms. Bright: **dream**  
 273 Maria: **dream. The big skeleton and the little skeleton put the []**  
 274 Ms. Bright: **dinosaur**  
 275 Maria: **dinosaur bones []**  
 276 Ms. Bright: **together**  
 277 Maria: **together again. They make the []**  
 278 Ms. Bright: **biggest**

Key: [] pause of 1-4 seconds

Maria hesitated in lines 271, 275 and 277 but this time on each occasion Ms. Bright prompted her with the next word. These subtle interpretations by Ms. Bright of short silences indicate the importance of differentiation in qualitative research and that even silences cannot be placed within a single category as they may result in varying responses. In this case they produced utterances of affirmation and of assistance from Ms. Bright. Her discourses

## CHAPTER 19: PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES

were those of a skilled and experienced professional and indicate that she was aware of the capabilities of individual children. Evidence for this is found in Transcript 19.3 (line 272) because when Olwen was having difficulty reading, Ms. Bright told her: “You know that word.”

Although there is no record of this in my field notes, it is possible that Maria may have indicated by non-verbal signs such as eye movement that she needed confirmation rather than assistance. Volosinov (1986, p.95) points out that “verbal intercourse is inextricably interwoven with communication of other types” and although this may be difficult for the analyst to interpret, it is an essential aspect of creating meaning through discourse. The above examples also act as a reminder that however detailed the transcription, it will always represent an abridged version of the interaction.

Contrary to what might have been expected, Ms. Bright’s discourse showed a greater emphasis on certain pedagogical techniques during the running record section of the book. *The Teacher’s Handbook* (QCA, 1997, p.13, bold print as in original) indicates that:

It is **very important** to give the child time to attempt unknown words. Say the word only when the child is clearly stuck...and mark these words ‘T’ [*Told*] on the running record.

Ms. Bright was keen to ensure that the children had the opportunity to give a good performance on the running record but each word she told them counted as an error. Therefore, during this section she provided clues in order to help the children read the words, rather than tell them almost immediately as she tended to do in the rest of the book. The transcript below is typical of the kind of pedagogical techniques which were used to help pupils who were having difficulty reading a word in the running record section:

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Transcript 19.3: Olwen was reading the running record section of *The Stars* (Moore, 1994)

Olwen: ...**The sun which se, sen**, [ 4 seconds]

Ms. Bright: **sends**

Olwen: **sends us all over**

Ms. Bright: **all**

Olwen: [7 seconds]

Ms. Bright: You can't sound that one out. **The sun which sends us all something light [] our**

Olwen: **our light**

Ms. Bright: **light**, mmm.

Olwen: **and he []**

Ms. Bright: What does it do? It gives us **light and** [4 seconds]. What's that word without the h?

Olwen: **hat**

Ms. Bright: No, without the h.

Olwen: **et**

Ms. Bright: eat, so put h on the front and you've got []

Olwen: **het**

Ms. Bright: **heat**

Olwen: **heat is only a star. The heat**

Ms. Bright: No, what do we live on?

Olwen: **earth mo, moves**

Ms. Bright: Yes

Olwen: **moves**

Ms. Bright: Yes, **moves**, you said it.

Olwen: **a, only**

Ms. Bright: Yes, a was the first bit

Olwen: **ar**

Ms. Bright: Do you know what that word is? **R, ound**

Olwen: **round**

Ms. Bright: Good, yes.

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- 271 Olwen: **the sun which looks much brilliant**  
272 Ms. Bright: Almost, yes. You know that word.  
273 Olwen: **brilliant**  
274 Ms. Bright: Not brilliant. Try it again.  
275 Olwen: **b [] br []**  
276 Ms. Bright: **bright**  
277 Olwen: **bright**  
278 Ms. Bright: **brighter**  
279 Olwen: **than any of the []**  
280 Ms. Bright: Right. So, **The earth moves around the sun which looks**  
281 **much brighter than any of the []**  
282 Olwen: **o, oth**  
283 Ms. Bright: Yes, o, oth [4 seconds] in the middle [] **other**

Key: [] pause of 1-4 seconds; over error in reading

Yet shortly before this, in a non-running record section, Ms. Bright quickly told Olwen words she did not know, without offering any clues.

Transcript 19.4: Olwen was reading a non-running record section of *The Stars* (Moore, 1994)

- 194 Olwen: **soon you will re []**  
195 Ms. Bright: **recognize**  
196 Olwen: **recognize the d []**  
197 Ms. Bright: **different**  
198 Olwen: **different gr []**  
199 Ms. Bright: **groups**  
200 Olwen: **groups ver []**  
201 Ms. Bright: **visible**  
202 Olwen: **visible from your part of the []**  
203 Ms. Bright: **earth**  
204 Olwen: **earth you will be []**

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- 194 Ms. Bright: **able**
- 195 Olwen: **able to see the red and or []**
- 196 Ms. Bright: **orange**
- 197 Olwen: **orange stars, the []**
- 198 Ms. Bright: **gas**
- 199 Olwen: **gas []**
- 200 Ms. Bright: **clouds**
- 201 Olwen: **clouds and much []**
- 202 Ms. Bright: **more**
- 203 Olwen: **more if you take a star []**
- 204 Ms. Bright: **map**
- 205 Olwen: **map and go out at night**
- 206 Ms. Bright: Good.
- 207 Olwen: **you will []**
- 208 Ms. Bright: **quickly**
- 209 Olwen: **quickly []**
- 210 Ms. Bright: **find**
- 211 Olwen: **find that you are making fr []**
- 212 Ms. Bright: **friends**

Key: [] pause of 1-4 seconds; re error in reading

Ms. Bright's provision of more clues and more time to read the words in the running record section was a feature of almost all the SATs. The only exceptions were pupils such as Samantha and Trevor who read the passage fluently and without error and so did not require any assistance. One of the reasons why Ms. Bright supplied the words quickly in the non-running record sections of the book may have been lack of time. She indicated in Excerpt 19.1 that this was an influential factor in the way in which she conducted the SATs. Yet to say the children were rushed through the SATs would be misleading, as in the questioning sequences Ms. Bright allowed the children relatively long pauses to consider their responses. An example of



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this occurs in Transcript 20.1 where Ms. Bright allowed Sonia pauses of 6, 4, 9 and 5 seconds to think about her answers in a relatively short sequence. Similarly, Anne was allowed 17 seconds to consider a response, Shirley 14 seconds, Alan 13 seconds and John 12 seconds.

According to Mercer:

teachers tolerate very short silences after asking a question, and that by leaving longer pauses they could encourage a much higher rate of response from their students. (1995, p.28)

The use of relatively long pauses by Ms. Bright in the question and answer sequences may have helped the pupils to consider *their responses*. However, it should be added that Mercer was concerned with teacher-pupil interactions involving a whole class, in which case teachers may try to avoid long pauses for reasons of control and keeping the pupils' attention. As the reading SATs always involved a one-to-one situation, Ms. Bright may have found it easier to maintain the pupils' attention and to monitor that they were actually using the pauses to think about the questions. It was argued in Chapter 7 that non-linguistic signifiers are an important aspect of intertextuality. Silences do not merely constitute a hiatus between intertexts but form part of a teacher's pedagogical technique and are likely to influence pupils' responses.

### CHAPTER 20

#### THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

It was argued in the previous chapters that Ms. Bright used various techniques such as questioning and summarising in order to steer the interaction along the route which she thought appropriate. Her responses were shaped both by the pupils' previous discourse and by her expectations of their future contributions. This was indicated by the way in which she formed her questions in accordance with her assessment of the pupils' knowledge and the likelihood of them providing a satisfactory answer.

#### Excerpt 20.1: from interview with Ms. Bright on 02/04/97

APL: Would you put your questions simpler than they've suggested [*in the Teacher's Handbook*] or would it depend on the ability of the child?

Ms. Bright: It would depend on the ability of the child and how they responded.

Ms. Bright's interview comments were supported by the way she adapted the question sequences to the pupil's responses, as Transcript 20.1 indicates.

#### Transcript 20.1: Sonia was reading 'Once There Were Giants' (Waddell, 1989) in which a girl narrates her experiences of family and school

- 155 Sonia      **The one with the black eye is me.**
- 156 Ms. Bright: Right, so what's happened so far in the story?
- 157 Sonia:      [6 seconds] Em, the baby's got older and she's fought with her
- 158              brother.
- 159 Ms. Bright: She's had a fight with her brother hasn't she, yes, and what did
- 160              she do when she went to playschool? [ 4 seconds] Why do you
- 161              think she wouldn't play any games when she first went there?
- 162 Sonia:      Because she was shy.

## CHAPTER 20: THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

- 163 Ms. Bright: She was shy, yes. Did you go to playschool, playgroup?  
164 Sonia: Yes.  
165 Ms. Bright: Can you remember, were you shy at first?  
166 Sonia: Em, I can't remember.  
167 Ms. Bright: Why do you think she had a fight with her brother?  
168 Sonia: [9 seconds] Don't know.  
169 Ms. Bright: Do you have fights with your sister?  
170 Sonia: Mmm.  
171 Ms. Bright: I thought you might! What sort of things do you fight about?  
172 Sonia: [5 seconds] [laughs] Having her hair done first.  
173 Ms. Bright: Your sister has her hair done first. Do you fight over toys and  
174 games and what you're going to play?

Key: **bold print** indicates text from reading book; [6 seconds] indicates timed pause

In line 156 of Transcript 20.1 Ms. Bright signalled to Sonia that she should stop reading, by saying "Right". This acted as a marker or "verbal framing device" (Lin, 1994, p.386) to indicate to the pupil that a new interactional sequence was about to commence. In line 159 Ms. Bright confirmed that Sonia's answer to her first question was satisfactory by paraphrasing it, although with an unacknowledged correction of grammar which is typical of teacher reformulations (see Chapter 10). When Sonia failed to provide an immediate response to her second question (line 160), Ms. Bright made it more specific by mentioning "games" and "when she first went there" (line 161). Sonia's response (line 162) is confirmed as correct by Ms. Bright's repetition of it and saying "yes".

The sequence appears to end at line 166 because Sonia could not remember if she was shy and as this depended upon personal knowledge Ms. Bright was unable to supply any clues which would help her. Therefore, in line 167 Ms. Bright turned the conversation back to the reading book and asked what the children were fighting about. (The illustration on page 17 of 'Once There

Were Giants' shows the children struggling on the ground and one of them is holding a skipping rope.) When, even after a long pause, Sonia was unable to answer the question, Ms. Bright then moved away from the topic of the reading book and asked a question about Sonia's out-of-school experiences: "Do you have fights with your sister?"

In order to ask this question Ms. Bright needed to draw upon the specific knowledge that Sonia had a sister of similar age and the background knowledge that siblings often quarrel. In line 171 Ms. Bright built on Sonia's response to ask her about the causes of the fights between her and her sister. She acknowledged Sonia's answer was valid by repeating it (line 173) but then asked a question about toys and games which appeared to link back to her question in line 167 concerning the cause of the fight. In a subsequent interview, Ms. Bright confirmed that the illustration in the book suggested to her that the fight was over the skipping rope.

This transcript indicates the way in which Ms. Bright's discourse was shaped by the pupil's contributions. Her questions were, to some extent, responses to Sonia's responses. This is consistent with Bakhtin's theory of addressivity which maintains that every utterance is shaped by the anticipation of an answer. Ms. Bright was prepared to change the topic, provide clues and use Sonia's out-of-school experiences in order to steer the conversation towards her goal of assessing the pupil's understanding of the story. She could be compared to a skilful and experienced tennis player who knows where she wishes to place her shots but can only achieve this by adapting them in response to her opponent's returns.

Ms. Bright's status as the arbiter of relevant knowledge placed her in a dominant position during the SATs. There was only one occasion in which a pupil disputed Ms. Bright's interpretation of the facts and this is included in the transcript below.

## CHAPTER 20: THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

Transcript 20.2: John was reading 'Pizza' (Moses, 1992). During a discussion on recipes for pizzas Ms. Bright was telling him how to peel onions without making his eyes water

- 361 Ms. Bright: Do it under water. Put the onions in water and cut them under  
362 water. It does help a little bit. They're not quite {so strong --  
363 John: {There's some  
364 girl crying out there. [Looks through classroom window and  
365 points at the playground]  
366 Ms. Bright: Oh yes.  
367 John: Yeah.  
368 Ms. Bright: Year one she's {got --  
369 John: {Out of year three.  
370 Ms. Bright: Oh, out of year three. Perhaps she's got onions in her  
371 sandwiches.  
372 John: No, she wasn't eating sandwiches.  
373 Ms. Bright: Oh, right, shall we get on with this book? Now then, so this is,  
374 this is the recipe isn't it?  
375 John: Yes.

Key: -- interruption by another speaker

{so

{There's overlapping speech

Although John challenged Ms. Bright's comments on two occasions (lines 369, 372) he did so on a matter of perception rather than questioning her professional expertise or background knowledge. It should be added that this was done in a friendly manner and the pupils appeared to enjoy a good working relationship with Ms. Bright. This was also one of the few occasions when she allowed herself to be interrupted and for the pupil to 'take the floor'. Even so, John's contributions were brief as in lines 373-4 Ms. Bright rapidly maintained control of the situation by moving the conversation back to the reading book. When she said, "Oh, right, shall we get on with this book?" this appears to be merely a rhetorical question as she did not give

John the opportunity to respond but instead presented him with a factual question.

Transcript 20.2 also shows the creative way in which Ms. Bright used even unexpected intertextual resources to match her overall theme and this accords with the argument in Chapter 6 that individuals can display considerable ingenuity when they are linking discourses. John's attention had been diverted by the noise of a child crying in the playground (lines 363-5) but Ms. Bright turned this into a joke (line 370-1) which was connected to their previous discussion on how to peel onions without producing tears (lines 361-2). Apparently, John failed to understand the intertextual reference which made this statement humorous and interpreted it as an erroneous perception. The reason for the misunderstanding may be that he interpreted Ms. Bright's statement in lines 370-1 as a *conventional* implicature which, according to Grice (1999), means that the utterance should be taken literally (see Chapter 8). However, Ms. Bright seems to have intended that it should be taken as a *conversational* implicature which transgressed the maxim of Quality (truthfulness) in order to make a joke. This provides an example of how a lack of shared inferences can cause communication problems between a pupil and a teacher.

On another occasion, the intertexts used by a pupil may have been misinterpreted by Ms. Bright:

Transcript 20.3: Alan was reading *The Snow Lambs* (Gliori, 1995)

- 194 Ms. Bright: Where are they putting the sheep?
- 195 Alan: In the garage.
- 196 Ms. Bright: That's a barn, we call it a barn, it does look a bit like a garage,
- 197 doesn't it, yes.

In common with Ms. Bright, I also assumed that six-year-old Alan did not know that the usual name for the kind of farm building shown in the

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197 doesn't it, yes.

In common with Ms. Bright, I also assumed that six-year-old Alan did not know that the usual name for the kind of farm building shown in the

## CHAPTER 20: THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

illustration was a barn. However, later in the SAT Ms. Bright and Alan were discussing the effects of a heavy snowfall:

### Transcript 20.4: (ibid.)

- 379 Alan: Our car's got stuck in the snow.  
380 Ms. Bright: You've got stuck in the snow, you can remember doing that, can  
381 you? We don't have much snow do we?  
382 Alan: My Dad's truck pulled it out.  
383 Ms. Bright: Your Dad's truck? Oh, of course, he's got some trucks, hasn't  
384 he?  
385 Alan: Yes.

Ms. Bright then moved the discussion back to the reading book but I wondered if Alan's father kept his trucks in a garage which resembled the illustration of the barn. I asked him about this after he had finished the SAT:

### Excerpt 20.2: from interview with Alan (21/05/99)

- APL: ...when you said it was a garage, had you forgotten the word barn or did it look like a garage to you?  
Alan: I thought it was attached to the house.

Alan's rationale had not occurred to me, or apparently to Ms. Bright when I subsequently discussed it with her, as we both interpreted the illustration on pages 4-5 of 'The Snow Lambs' as the barn being in the foreground of the picture and the house some distance away in the background. The idea that Alan might construe it in a different way was given some support from his *interpretation of another illustration in the book*.

### Transcript 20.5: Alan and Ms. Bright were looking at the illustration on pages 18-19 of 'the Snow Lambs' and discussing how the sheepdog could cross the river

- 457 Alan: Because there's a bridge there.



458 Ms. Bright: You think there might be a bridge. I think the river just goes  
459 round a bend and it disappears then actually.

Ms. Bright's familiarity with the conventions of illustration and sense of perspective interpreted this illustration as the river disappearing round a bend and into a valley whilst Alan appeared to construe it as the snow covering a bridge. These transcripts suggest that Alan may have had logical reasons for his ideas, although the basis upon which they were formed may have differed from that used by Ms. Bright.

I did not ask Alan about the 'bridge' during our interview as I only realised its possible relevance to the other illustration when I was transcribing the audio-tape. This itself is an example of how the source of intertexts may not be apparent to the speakers and listeners at the time and may only emerge as a result of the analysis. Stubbs warns that the micro-analysis of discourse may focus:

enormous analytic attention on details of interaction which had no significance at the time. The details may only be observable at all when the discourse is audio-recorded and transcribed and listened to repeatedly. This is not how conversationalists experience interaction in real time.  
(1983, p.150)

Therefore, although the intertextual links between discourses have been discussed, this does not necessarily mean that either the speakers or their audience were aware of them at the time they were being produced.

Transcript 20.3 also provides an example of how Ms. Bright combined background and linguistic knowledge to use the principles of politeness in conversation (see Chapter 8) and these include assisting the other participant to save 'face', i.e. self-esteem. When Alan referred to the barn as a garage (line 195) Ms. Bright said: "That's a barn, we call it a barn, it does look a bit

like a garage, doesn't it, yes." Rather than bluntly telling Alan that he had given an incorrect response, Ms. Bright provided him with what she regarded as the correct answer but mollified this by saying that the barn resembled a garage. This implied that it was easy to make this mistake and she could understand why Alan had confused them. Similarly, in Transcript 20.6 below, Ms. Bright helped Olwen to 'save face' by praising her incorrect answer before providing her with the correct information.

Transcript 20.6: Olwen was reading *The Stars* (Moore, 1994)

- 27 Ms. Bright: Do you know what the name of the nearest star to us is?  
28 Olwen: Er [8 seconds pause] Mars.  
29 Ms. Bright: Mars is a planet, good girl, but the nearest star to us is actually  
30 the sun.

The above transcript may also indicate a lack of shared intertexts, as six-year-old Olwen may not have differentiated between planets and stars whereas Ms. Bright regarded them as belonging to different categories. It was argued in Chapter 7 that different forms of categorisation can reflect different perspectives, in this case between the cosmography of children and adults.

Before this project commenced, one of my main concerns was whether formal testing at six and seven years of age would create anxiety for the children. However, over the three years of the study I found no evidence for this and most of the children seemed to have regarded their reading SAT as a non-threatening or even enjoyable experience. It is difficult to evaluate the extent of another person's enjoyment, particularly as the pupils had no choice other than to take the SAT, but my impression both from the observations and listening to the audio-tapes was that the children were usually enthusiastic participants.

Some evidence for this was obtained from the interviews with Ms. Bright and her comments on the Reading Assessment Records.

### Excerpt 20.3: from interview with Ms. Bright on 14/05/97

APL: Have any of them been nervous or have they all accepted this  
*[the SATs]* as normal?

Ms. Bright: No, they're used to reading because they read each day either to me or to a helper... When they read to me they have to read a book they've not seen.

APL: Yes.

Ms. Bright: So they're used to reading aloud unseen material...

It could be argued that Ms. Bright had a vested interest in presenting the SATs, and by implication herself, in a favourable light but I found that there was a reasonably good correspondence between her discourse in the SATs and what she said in the interviews and wrote on the Reading Assessment Records. She knew the children well, having been their class teacher for over two terms, and so was in a position to judge the effect that SATs would have upon individual pupils.

### Figure 20.1: Ms. Bright's comments on the Reading Assessment Record section - "personal response to book"

Alan: Showed interest in story, chatty.

Anne: Enjoyed the book and understood what was happening.  
Answered questions with recall and sensible ideas and suggestions.

Errol: Enjoyed book - realised straight away that the beetle was on each page and made a point of looking for it.

George: Responded very well to the book and illustrations. Enjoyed it tremendously.

John: He enjoyed the funny pictures and the book overall - he was positive about all aspects of the book. Answered questions well.

## CHAPTER 20: THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

- Maria: Enjoyed story. Able to predict etc. by using pictures.
- Nigel: Understood story.
- Olwen: Very involved in the book.
- Samantha: Enjoyed book and able to offer ideas of her own and incidents from her own life.
- Shefali: Enjoyed book. Responded well. Understood story and events.
- Shirley: Laughed in several places.
- Shobna: Laughed at the ending and knew why butter applied, why he was tickled etc.
- Sonia: Enjoyed book - answered questions sensibly and with ideas, recall etc.
- Trevor: Enjoyed book. Discussed book, dogs, pets, etc.
- Wesley: Although enjoyed looking through Touch chose Tom's Cat. Probably because he had looked through the others and enjoyed the pictures and read some of the words already so wanted to find out what Tom's Cat was about.

For 10 out of the 15 pupils, Ms. Bright commented that they had enjoyed the book and of the others, one was "very involved in the book", one "showed interest", two pupils laughed on occasions and only Nigel was not mentioned as making any affective response. The pupils' enjoyment did not appear to depend upon their level of achievement as the enjoyment of George and John, who both scored 2C, was discussed in Chapter 18 and Wesley, who received the level 1 grade, was particularly notable for his excitement over the events in the story.

One of the reasons why most children appeared to have enjoyed their SAT was that Ms. Bright displayed enthusiasm and joined in with the pupils so that the creation of humour, interest, suspense and excitement became a shared activity. This is indicated in the following short transcripts:

Transcript 20.7: Wesley was looking at the illustration on pages 3-4 of 'Tom's Cat' (Voake, 1996)

4 Wesley: [laughs] He's got all his clothes on!

5 Ms. Bright: They're awfully long socks aren't they? Who's going to wear  
6 those do you think?

7 Wesley: {[laughs]

8 Ms. Bright: {[laughs]

Key: { overlapping discourse

Transcript 20.8: Shobna was looking at the illustration on page 28 of 'Not Like That, Like This' (Bradman, 1988)

5 Ms. Bright: [laughs] What's happened?.

6 Shobna: His head's stuck now! [laughs]

7 Ms. Bright: His head's stuck now isn't it, his head's stuck now!

As the above transcripts suggest, the illustrations were an important source of the children's enjoyment of the books and this was supported by their comments in the interviews.

Excerpt 20.4: from interview with Maria on 14/05/99 after she had read 'Dinosaur Dreams' (Ahlberg, 1990) for her SAT

APL: What did you think about the story?

Maria: I liked it.

APL: Were there any bits you liked especially?

Maria: Em, I liked the bit when they, when in the dream, when they chase.

APL: Were there any other good bits?

Maria: [] When the dog bit the bone.

Key: [] pause of 1-4 seconds

Transcript 20.7: Wesley was looking at the illustration on pages 3-4 of 'Tom's Cat' (Voake, 1996)

- 74 Wesley: [laughs] He's got all his clothes on!  
75 Ms. Bright: They're awfully long socks aren't they? Who's going to wear  
76 those do you think?  
77 Wesley: {[laughs]  
78 Ms. Bright: {[laughs]

Key: { overlapping discourse

Transcript 20.8: Shobna was looking at the illustration on page 28 of 'Not Like That, Like This' (Bradman, 1988)

- 255 Ms. Bright: [laughs] What's happened?  
256 Shobna: His head's stuck now! [laughs]  
257 Ms. Bright: His head's stuck now isn't it, his head's stuck now!

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## CHAPTER 20: THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

Mills (1988, p.49) argues that "understanding what is not said is at the root of the humour of many popular picture books for young children" and the humour of the above examples depends upon implicit allusions to other discourses. In Transcript 20.7, Ms. Bright and Wesley's background knowledge enabled them to realise that the socks which Grandma was knitting were far too long for anyone to wear. In Transcript 20.8 Shobna did not need to be explicitly told that when Tom's head got stuck in the railings he was unlikely to be seriously injured, so it was an amusing rather than an alarming incident. The genre of children's picture books in general and the style of "Not Like That, Like This!" in particular may have prepared readers for the inclusion of humorous incidents in the plot. In Excerpt 20.4, Maria appeared to use implicit knowledge derived from other discourses that it was amusing for a dog to chase dinosaur skeletons because he wanted to taste the bones. In the above examples, the incidents appear to have been interpreted by the readers as humorous rather than dramatic, frightening or incomprehensible. This indicates the often implicit nature of intertextuality and the way in which context and background knowledge appear to promote certain interpretations rather than others (see Chapters 4 and 9).

Although brief, Transcripts 20.7 and 20.8 and Excerpt 20.4 convey some of the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the children during their reading SATs. The only noticeable exception was Nigel who tended to be taciturn but this may have been due to his difficulty in reading the book. He had only been in Ms. Bright's class for two weeks before he took the SAT and may not have felt so at ease with her as the other children who knew her well. Whereas most pupils appear to have shared Ms. Bright's sense of what was humorous in the story, at least in terms of their overt responses, Nigel does not seem to have done so:

Transcript 20.9: Nigel has just completed reading 'Finish the Story, Dad'  
(Smee, 1991)

361 Ms. Bright: Do you think the ending's funny?

## CHAPTER 20: THE PUPILS' DISCOURSE

362 Nigel: No.

363 Ms. Bright: You don't. At last Dad will come up and read the story but she's  
364 fallen asleep. You don't think that's funny?

365 Nigel: I don't think that's funny.

It may be that the enjoyment of the book is a intertext which creates rapport between teacher and pupil but in this case it was not shared.

The desire to stimulate the pupils' enjoyment influenced Ms. Bright's discourse during the SATs. She appears to have tried hard to create a positive social relationship between herself and the children. Also, her background knowledge and pedagogic experience are likely to have made her aware that their enjoyment and enthusiasm would be likely to enhance their performance.



### CHAPTER 21 THE READING BOOK

Although it might have been predicted that the reading book would be a major intertextual resource, the extent of its presence was surprising. In the fifteen transcribed SATs it was difficult to find even a short passage which was not obviously related to the theme of the reading book. In Transcript 18.1, Ms. Bright discussed the eating habits of Samantha's baby brother (lines 105-110) as this had a direct connection with the main theme of "Eat up, Gemma". Yet when Samantha tried to discuss ways of getting her brother to sleep (lines 115-116) and her mother (line 118), on both occasions she was interrupted by Ms. Bright who abruptly moved the discussion back to food (lines 119-120).

Even when the pupil used a reference from the book it was likely to be dismissed if Ms. Bright did not consider it to be directly relevant to the current discussion. When Samantha referred to an illustration by saying, "Then a little boy, he was swinging on a tree" (line 125) Ms. Bright swiftly moved the conversation back to the main theme (lines 126-7) without giving Samantha the opportunity to establish whether she was going to link the illustration with food. Throughout the SATs if pupils failed to clarify the relevance of intertextual links early in their contribution, Ms. Bright intervened to insert the central theme. This is consistent with the findings of other studies reviewed in Part B which found that teachers require pupils to establish the relevance of their answers both quickly and explicitly.

Transcript 21.1: Errol was reading "Billy's Beetle" (Inkpen, 1991) which involves a search for a missing caterpillar

- 164 Errol: So once there was this programme I watched years ago but it's  
165 not on now and there was these men and they, and they kept, and

- 166                   there was two men and they were killed by a hairy caterpillar.  
 167   Ms. Bright: Oh gosh! Killed by a hairy caterpillar! **Instantly**  
 168   Errol:       **Instantly the elephant ...**

Key: **bold print** indicates text from reading book

Although Ms. Bright expressed a conventionally appropriate amount of surprise she did not follow up Errol's story but immediately returned his attention to the reading book by prompting him with the next word. Her definition of a relevant intertext during SATs does not appear to have included a story concerning a lethal, hairy caterpillar even though the pupil regarded it as pertinent and interesting.

Ms. Bright was aware that she was curtailing the pupils' contributions and expressed some regret at this. Excerpt 21.1 indicates the influence of the situational and institutional demands of time on her discourse during the SATs.

Excerpt 21.1: from interview with Ms. Bright on 21/04/97.

Ms. Bright: Estelle was talking about something and I said, I so much wanted to get over my point and ask a question that I sort of interrupted her but then I'm very much, it's taking up to half an hour to do each one and I'm very conscious of the time and the only time I can do it is at lunch time and then there's a lot of background noise from children coming in and out for dinners and things like this and I'm very conscious that the child's got to go in and have their lunch or they've just had lunch and they'd want to go out and play with their friends and so on and so that's influencing, I'm perhaps trying to rush them a little bit as well.

A frequent topic in the interviews with Ms. Bright was how she managed to assess the child's understanding of the book. She appears to have regarded it

as being similar to comprehension, if this is defined as providing answers which demonstrate that the examinee's interpretation of a text is consistent with that of the examiner.

Excerpt 21.2: from interview with Ms. Bright on 19/04/99.

Ms. Bright: "...there's very little you can do for a child who's reading and not understanding other than question them when they're reading. Knowing what the problem is, it's not being able to, how do you put it right other than give them plenty of comprehension work."

In order to be able to answer questions 'correctly' the pupils' interpretation of the story needed to correspond to Ms. Bright's. If they failed to do this she often gave them clues such as Samantha was encouraged to think about food (Transcript 18.1, lines 102-105) and Sonia was asked about fights over toys and games (Transcript 20.1, lines 173-4). These clues were intended to enable pupils to interpret the text in a similar way to Ms. Bright and to avoid straying into 'wrong' directions. This is indicated in a comment on Roy's Reading Assessment Record in which Ms. Bright stated that he was: "Able to respond and understood story with a little help and guidance in the right direction".

Ms. Bright's questions concerning the characters, events and situations in the book were consistent with instructions in the Teacher's Handbook (QCA, 1998, pp.18-19) such as "...provide evidence of the extent to which the child can read a specified passage accurately, fluently and with understanding" (ibid., p.18). The detailed information for each grade comes under two headings "Reading with accuracy, fluency and understanding" and "Understanding and response" (ibid., p.19). Similarly, a major heading on the Reading Assessment Record sheets is "**Understanding and response**" (bold print as in original). As Ms. Bright generally endeavoured to adhere to the instructions in the handbooks and to complete all the sections of the Reading Assessment Records, then the need to assess the child's 'understanding'

played a prominent part in her SATs discourse.

It was argued in Chapter 18 that a good demonstration of 'understanding' by the pupils would not increase their grades if they made too many errors on the running record. However, if pupils failed to respond to clues and provide an interpretation which was consistent with Ms. Bright's, then this could result in them receiving a lower grade than might have been predicted from their performance on the running record passage.

Excerpt 21.3: from interview with Ms. Bright on 15/05/97. (Derek made no errors on his running record, whilst Brian made one when reading 'The Toymaker' (Waddell, 1991). Both were awarded grade 2B.)

Ms. Bright: "...[Derek was] reading mechanically but not for understanding.

And the same thing today with Brian and 'The Toymaker', exactly the same thing. Reading mechanically but not really, he didn't understand the story...it's quite obvious he didn't understand what was happening in the story, that the little girl had grown up, that her father had made the toys for her because she was too ill to go out and once she got better they were put away and she brought her little, he got the idea of the granddaughter and then he got a bit mixed up with the family relationships but they do at that age and he didn't even understand why the lady who was Mary, and I told him it was Mary the little girl, he couldn't really understand why she'd made the Toymaker [doll] and in the end I had to give him enough hints that it was because he had been her father and he got very mixed up with the family relationships which of course he would because he hadn't understood the story properly or what was happening. So it was quite, I could see why those two [Derek and Brian] failed to get the level 3 on the reading comprehension [test]."

Here, Ms. Bright specifically compared the pupils' performances on the Reading Assessment Task with those on the Reading Test which is a 'pencil and paper' comprehension test (see Chapter 11). She says that she "told him it was Mary" when Brian did not understand who the little girl was, and that she had "to give him enough hints" concerning the family relationship. Brian apparently failed to make sufficient use of these clues, which suggests that he needed to see the story from Ms. Bright's perspective if he was to achieve 'understanding'. The SAT transcripts support the evidence from the above interview that if pupils failed to respond to clues or gave an unsatisfactory response, Ms. Bright told them the 'correct' version of the story. An example of this will be shown in Transcript 22.1 when, after Sonia had given a 'wrong' answer to what had happened in the story, Ms. Bright told her the 'correct' version.

Ms. Bright was aware that there might be alternative ways of interpreting the text and that there might be a conflict between the manner in which adults and children perceived the stories:

## Excerpt 21.4: from interview with Ms. Bright on 26/04/99:

APL: Do you feel that perhaps the child could have a different way of interpreting the book than yours? Is that possible?

Ms. Bright: Yes. When you ask children questions about the book they sometimes come up with another idea which you hadn't thought of and is quite plausible and you know I've got an idea in my head of why something's happened. Yes sometimes children come up with an idea that's perfectly logical really or at least perfectly logical from a child's point of view. The trouble is I think a lot of grown-ups look at something and they look at it from an adult point of view rather than seeing it from a child's.

APL: And do you think the assessment should be from an adult's point of view, the grading or --

Ms. Bright: Well the grading's got to be as an adult, how you'd assess the

## CHAPTER 21: THE READING BOOK

child but sometimes when a child interprets something you can see, oh yes I can see why they're saying that, it's perfectly logical for a child to think like that, a child's world is like that so therefore you have to make allowances for it.

Key: -- interruption by another speaker

Although Ms. Bright said that she was prepared to accept suggestions which she had not previously considered and made allowances for differing interpretations by the children, I found little evidence to support this claim in the fifteen transcribed SATs. There were no instances of her accepting a major difference of interpretation in what had already occurred in the story, although on a few occasions she allowed alternative possibilities for what might happen in the future. An example of this occurs in Transcript 21.2.

Transcript 21.2: Alan and Ms. Bright were looking at the illustration on pages 2-3 of *The Snow Lambs* (Gliori, 1995)

- 142 Ms. Bright: If that [tree] comes down it will bring the power lines with it and  
143 then what would happen?  
144 Alan: [] The house will get on fire.  
145 Ms. Bright: I don't think it would get, yes, I suppose it might if a spark came  
146 from one of those. But they'd lose their electricity wouldn't  
147 they?  
148 Alan: Yes and the lights would go off.

Key: [] pause of 1-4 seconds

Ms. Bright seemed to initially reject Alan's answer (line 145) but she then appeared to reconsider and accept that this might be a possibility. However, she then continued with what was likely to have been her original intention as, having already read the book, she knew that the farmhouse would lose its electricity supply later in the story. Alan seemed to accept this and made no further mention of the possibility of the house catching fire. Throughout the

SATs no pupil overtly disagreed with Ms. Bright's interpretation of what had already happened in the story or even what was likely to happen.

In each SAT, Ms. Bright used the pupils' experiences at home and/or in school to create links between their knowledge of real situations and the text of the reading book. Her intention may have been to put the children at ease and encourage them to respond by comparing the text of the book to situations with which they were familiar. Ms. Bright also used her knowledge of individual children, derived from other discourses, to create rapport. In Transcript 18.1, she knew that Samantha had a baby brother, in Transcript 20.1 that Sonia had a sister of a similar age and in Transcript 20.4 that Alan's father owned some trucks.

This enabled the testing situation to resemble a casual conversation between an adult and a child. However, what differentiated the SATs from non-assessment conversations was that Ms. Bright was obliged to appraise the pupil's responses by making notes on the Reading Assessment Record. Also, as was indicated earlier, she curtailed any contributions from the child which she did not consider directly relevant to the task. Under the usual politeness conventions, *hearers normally allow speakers to make their point before changing the subject and interruptions may indicate conversational dominance on the part of the perpetrator* (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, p.169).

Ms. Bright conferred a status to the texts of the reading books which placed them above the child's own experience if these discourses provided conflicting responses to her questions. The main topic in Transcript 18.1 appears to be centred on the question which was first alluded to by Ms. Bright in lines 98-100 and then asked specifically in line 102: "Why do you think she's not eating her food?" Samantha provided anecdotes based on personal experience of her baby brother and his eating habits (lines 106; 111-113) but these failed to satisfy Ms. Bright as she interrupted Samantha's account (line 118), repeated the initial question in a revised form (line 119),

and indicated the direction of an appropriate response by providing clues based on the text (lines 119-120).

Other examples of the privileging of Ms. Bright's interpretation of the text over personal knowledge and experience occurred during the SATs. In Transcript 20.1 the discussion of Sonia's experience of fights with her sister was steered by Ms. Bright (lines 173-4) into a question concerning arguments over toys, which was related to the illustration in the reading book. In Transcript 20.9 Ms. Bright appeared to use the text to make an implicit argument in support of her belief that an incident in the story was amusing, although Nigel had said that he did not think it was funny. This suggests that her interpretation of the text could be privileged over a pupil's affective response, in that she seems to have thought that Nigel should have found it amusing. Therefore, she did not accept his first negative answer and used the text to explain the 'joke' to him. In Transcript 22.1, Sonia's own experience of babies deferred to Ms. Bright's explanation that the babies at the beginning and end of the story were not the same. In Excerpt 21.3, Ms. Bright said that Brian "...got a bit mixed up with the family relationships but they do at that age...". As the plot of 'The Toymaker' takes place over a time span of more than fifty years, seven-year-old Brian would have to yield his personal knowledge to that of the text in order to understand the story. It was argued in Chapter 10 that teachers often endow the texts of reading books with an unchallengeable authority which gives them precedence over *the children's own experiences*.



### CHAPTER 22

#### BACKGROUND AND LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE

It was emphasized in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 that linguistic and background knowledge are mutually dependent and difficult to separate for analytical purposes. After a considerable amount of trial and error during the categorisation I eventually decided that isolating them imposed too artificial a division and transformed what I believe should be regarded as an entity into a dichotomy. The use of linguistic knowledge is dependent upon background knowledge which is both unique to the individual and yet socially-derived (Kress, 1989, p.12). If these types of knowledge are separated then this may imply that texts can be analysed out of context, as in traditional grammars in which the subjectivities of speakers and listeners are ignored. Therefore background and linguistic knowledge will be regarded as a single main intertext derived from naturally occurring classroom data.

Background knowledge was discussed in Chapter 9 and comprises the type of beliefs and assumptions common to members of a particular culture. Two characteristics of background knowledge are that people cannot usually recall where they first learned it and they assume that everyone else will also 'take it for granted' without the need for further explanation. Therefore, in this project it can be distinguished from knowledge derived from the *Teacher's Handbooks* and the *reading books* as both of these are identifiable sources and the teacher would not assume that other people would necessarily be familiar with them. Yet, as with all aspects of intertextuality, the boundaries between categories are permeable and both the handbooks and the reading books rely on everyday knowledge in order to be comprehensible. Similarly, the intertexts derived from Ms. Bright's pedagogical techniques are often difficult to distinguish from everyday knowledge but I have attempted to describe the former as those which would be typical of an experienced professional whilst the latter are resources available to everyone.

Examples of everyday knowledge shared by Ms. Bright and Samantha in

Transcript 18.1 are that stories have endings and that these endings are related to the theme of the story (lines 98-100); babies lose their appetite when they are ill (103-5); babies may turn their face away when they do not want to eat food (106-108); and that most babies are likely to behave in a similar manner (109-110). Ms. Bright used this shared knowledge as a means of creating a link between the text of the reading book and the pupil's real-life experiences. In order to answer the question of: "So what do you think's going to happen next in the story then?" (line 98), Samantha needed to merge her understanding of the story so far with her knowledge of people, events and contexts, and then consider the probability of various outcomes. This type of knowledge is rarely taught explicitly yet a thorough understanding is required if an individual is to participate fully in social interactions. Background and linguistic knowledge usually combine to facilitate the interpretation of utterances but if they appear to conflict, this can result in a lack of mutual comprehension. In Transcript 22.1, seven-year-old Sonia's personal experience of babies would not include them maturing into adults and it will be argued that Ms. Bright unintentionally complicated her questions by using too many cohesive devices.

Transcript 22.1: Sonia was reading 'Once There Were Giants' (Waddell 1989)

- 262 Ms. Bright: So the story's about this little baby isn't it? Right, so here's the  
263 little baby, is this the same baby at the end?  
264 Sonia: Er, yes.  
265 Ms. Bright: No, it's not the same baby, it's the baby's baby isn't it? The  
266 baby's grown up now and that's her baby isn't it?  
267 Sonia: Yes.

268 Ms. Bright: That's right, yes...

Having given an incorrect response in line 264, Sonia then overtly agreed with Ms. Bright in line 267 although the extent to which she shared Ms. Bright's interpretation of the story is unclear. Ms. Bright's questions in lines 265-266 took the form of statements which were converted into questions by concluding with "isn't it?". These resemble rhetorical questions and, given Sonia's inferior status in the interaction, it would have been difficult for her to disagree. The extent to which Sonia understood the questions is debatable because, as Donaldson (1978, p.63) has argued, contextual clues which adults regard as significant may not mean the same to young children. Incorrect responses may indicate failure to comprehend the question rather than failure to comprehend the concept (*ibid.*, p. 49).

Transcript 22.1 contains all the main cohesive devices discussed in Chapter 7. The potential ambiguity of the questions may be due to the presence of too many cohesive ties. This would support the argument made in Chapter 7 that an overabundance of cohesive links can decrease a reader's comprehension as conversations between people who know each other well tend to be inexplicit and context-dependent. Sonia may have found Ms. Bright's questions particularly confusing as the word "baby" occurred eight times in a short interactional sequence. Ms. Bright's use of "baby" includes both co-referentiality where the person referred to is the baby at the beginning of the story and co-classification where the original baby and her offspring are two members of an identical class, i.e. babies. (To make matters more confusing, the original baby, who is the narrator and main character in 'Once There Were Giants', is not named in the story and neither is her baby.)

In addition to co-referentiality and co-classification, the five main features of co-extension can be found in Transcript 22.1. Synonymy is present as Ms. Bright uses "at the end [of the book]" (line 263) and "now" (line 266) as terms which have similar meaning. This demonstrates the context-bound nature of synonymy in actual usage as "at the end" and "now" are unlikely to

be regarded as synonyms in a thesaurus, which deals with abstract, decontextualised terms.

Antonymy is also present as a cohesive device as the term “little baby” (line 262) is contrasted with “grown up now” (lines 266). This is an example of how Ms. Bright used cohesion to simultaneously convey the similarity and the difference between concepts.

Hyponymy is a relationship of inclusion where the elements can be arranged hierarchically (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1994, p.114). This occurs when Ms. Bright refers to a family, in this case a mother, i.e. “the baby’s grown up now” (lines 265-6) and “her baby” (line 266).

Meronymy, which refers to a part-whole relationship, occurs when Ms. Bright says “the story’s about this little baby” (line 262), as the story is the superordinate and the events concerning the two babies are amongst the elements which comprise it.

The cohesive device of repetition occurs throughout Ms. Bright’s discourse in this interaction, most noticeably in her frequent use of the word “baby”. Although this does not always refer to the same person, it creates cohesion both in and between the utterances through reference to the concept of babyhood.

The types of cohesive devices described above could only assist in conveying the meanings of the utterances if Ms. Bright and Sonia had a common method of creating inferences. If Sonia failed to understand Ms. Bright’s use of co-classification and co-referentiality, she would have difficulty distinguishing between the two babies. Cohesive devices alone are insufficient to establish meaning and so Sonia also needed to generate inferences based on background and contextual knowledge, such as “at the end [of the book]” indicated that the characters have grown older since the beginning of the story.

Transcript 22.1 provides an example of how intertextuality works to link different elements both within the text itself and also to other discourses. In doing so, it usually facilitates interpretation, although this is not inevitable. If it creates links to discourses which the speaker may not have intended, then it may result in a lack of comprehension. In this instance, Ms. Bright and Sonia were likely to have different schemata of babies maturing into adults and having babies of their own. Ms. Bright was likely to have had actual experiences of this, whereas seven-year-old Sonia's personal experiences would be of babies either remaining as babies or becoming young children. An alternative explanation may be that she grasped the concept but was confused by Ms. Bright's question. In either case, Sonia's 'failure' to understand the story line may have been the result of pupil and teacher using different intertexts.

It was argued in Chapter 9 that people use schemata to structure their social interactions as these help to make them more predictable and assist in memory retrieval. Scripts are types of schemata which represent background knowledge about the types of discourse which would be efficient and appropriate in particular situations. An analysis of the transcripts, field notes and interview data suggests that Ms. Bright had a script for the reading SAT as a whole. Each part can be termed a *speech event* as it describes an interactional sequence which forms part of the *speech situation* (the whole SAT).

### Figure 22.1: Ms. Bright's script for reading SATs at level 2

- (1) She explains SAT procedures.
- (2) Pupil chooses reading book.
- (3) She asks pupil to find the name of the author.
- (4) She asks pupil what they think the book is going to be about.
- (5) Pupil reads book.
- (6) She gives assistance when necessary, praises correct reading and asks questions.
- (7) Pupil reads running record passage while she fills in the source sheet.

- (8) She praises pupil for their performance on the running record.
- (9) Pupil reads remainder of book.
- (10) She gives assistance when necessary, praises correct reading and asks questions.
- (11) She thanks pupil.
- (12) She praises pupil for their performance on the SAT.
- (13) She fills in the Reading Assessment Record sheet.

This represents an approximate order in which the events occurred. In 7 of the 15 SATs, speech event (2) preceded (1), and on six occasions event (12) came before (11). Nevertheless, (1) and (2) always occurred at the beginning of the SAT and (11) and (12) near the end. It was unusual for a category to move forwards or backwards by more than one place. Ms. Bright's script for level 1 SATs was similar except for the omission of (7) and (8) which concern the running record passage.

Table 22.1: Check list of speech events in Ms. Bright's reading SAT script

|               | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) | (13) |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|
| Errol (97)    | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| John (97)     | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Nigel (97)    | Yes | No  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No  | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | No   | Yes  |
| Samantha (97) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Shirley (97)  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Anne (98)     | Yes | Yes | No  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | No   | Yes  | Yes  |
| George (98)   | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | No   | Yes  | Yes  |
| Shafali (98)  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Sonia (98)    | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No  | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Wesley (98)   | No  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | *   | *   | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Alan (99)     | Yes | No  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Maria (99)    | No  | No  | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | *   | *   | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Olwen (99)    | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Shobna (99)   | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | *   | *   | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Trevor (99)   | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  | Yes  |

Key: (1), (2), (3) = speech events; (97), (98), (99) year in which SAT was taken; \* = level 1 SAT, so running record section not applicable

If Ms. Bright's procedure for SATs is considered to be a script then most of the speech events are essential or default elements. On the occasions when Ms. Bright differed from the script this may indicate unusual circumstances, although not inevitably. Alan, Maria and Nigel did not choose their reading books for the reasons discussed in Chapter 18. Anne was the only pupil who was not asked to find the author's name, so I asked Ms. Bright about this in an interview:

Excerpt 22.1: from interview with Ms. Bright on 25/03/98

APL: Was there any particular reason why you didn't ask Anne to find the name of the author?

Ms. Bright: I forgot! [laughs]

Schemata are mental concepts rather than written lists, so it would not be surprising if occasionally events were omitted due to forgetfulness rather than strategic design. If the incidents of 'forgetfulness' were widespread or occurred regularly in specific parts of the SATs then this might suggest a pattern resulting from the omission of certain discourses.

All the pupils who took the Level 2 SAT were praised after they had read the running record passage except Nigel and Sonia. A possible reason why Nigel was not praised may have been that he made thirteen mistakes which was more than any other pupil. However, Sonia was also not praised after her running record although she made only three errors. As Ms. Bright commented in a subsequent interview that "Sonia's reading was OK..." and on her Reading Assessment Record she had written: "read quite well...", the reason why Sonia was not praised at the end of the running record is not apparent. It is possible that Ms. Bright forgot to praise one or both pupils, or she may have felt that they had not displayed their full potential. Explaining the presence or absence of particular discourses is always problematic and can only be achieved with confidence if sufficient evidence is available to

support the claims. These examples demonstrate that the source of certain intertexts must sometimes remain inconclusive.

All the main intertexts appear to have shaped Ms. Bright's script for reading SATs. The Teacher's Handbook (QCA 1998, pp.10-17) advises or instructs teachers to perform (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (9) and (13). Even sections (8), (11) and (12) in which Ms. Bright praises and thanks the pupils seems relevant to the advice: "offer the child as much support as necessary to maintain his or her confidence throughout the task" (ibid., p.11). This may be also derived from Ms. Bright's pedagogic experience and background knowledge that encouragement may enhance performance. Her questioning strategies, (6) and (10), were those of an experienced teacher who responded to the pupils' discourse by providing assistance according to her judgement of the pupil's needs. The reading book was necessarily a major influence in all the speech events, as even thanks and praise were related to the pupil's performance on the book.

Evidence that the overall structure of the SATs remained relatively stable can be derived from Table 22.1. This shows that Ms. Bright carried out similar speech events on 178 out of a possible 189 occasions. On the eleven occasions when she failed to perform what had become a regular feature of the SATs these were not specific to the year, as 3 occurred in 1997, 5 in 1998 and 3 in 1999. This suggests that the stability of Ms. Bright's script for reading SATs may be due to the constancy of the main discourses.



**PART E: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

**CHAPTER 23**

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE INITIAL  
QUESTIONS AND THE LITERATURE**

The main question posed in this study was: "Which are the most salient discourses in a teacher's implementation of the Key Stage 1 Standard Assessment Tasks for reading?" The analysis suggests that five main discourses were prominent throughout the SATs, namely, the Teacher's Handbooks, pedagogical techniques, the pupil's discourse, the reading book, and background and linguistic knowledge. Ms. Bright used these to achieve her primary goal of assessing the children's reading ability and the discourses blended together to combine the diffuse elements of the SAT into a unified speech occasion. Other situational, institutional and societal influences were salient but they acted as background influences or were only prominent in particular circumstances.

Whilst the main intertexts permeated each other to form Ms. Bright's SATs discourse they were not all of equal weight and could dominate others on certain occasions. It was argued in Chapter 18 that the Teacher's Handbook tended to override other discourses when they provided contrary perspectives. Although Ms. Bright's pedagogical techniques and background knowledge indicated that the pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for the reading book were relevant factors in the assessment, it was her interpretation of the handbook's instructions on the running record section which determined their grade. The domination of the handbook's discourse was not total as in certain aspects of the SATs, the pedagogical techniques and background knowledge discourses proved superior to it. This occurred

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when Ms. Bright selected only one book for Nigel's SAT which was contrary to the handbook's instructions. Her pedagogical experience and background knowledge appear to have persuaded her that Nigel could and should demonstrate his ability by reading an easier book. This variation in influence between the intertexts is consistent with Bakhtin's notion of language being a struggle between competing socio-ideological discourses.

The first subsidiary question asked: "How does a teacher work within these discourses to carry out the reading tasks?". It was found that Ms. Bright employed them as resources to achieve her goals within the limits set by her interpretation of the SAT handbooks. Bakhtin's view that discourses can be characterised as being either authoritative or internally persuasive, and that there is a "profound difference between these two categories" (1981, p.342) was not supported by the analysis of Ms. Bright's discourse. She appeared to regard some sections of the handbooks as being authoritative in the sense that the text "has but a single meaning" (ibid., p.343) and did not merge with other discourses. Yet she appears to have regarded some instructions, such as allowing the children to choose from between three and four books, as being open to the influence of alternative discourses. Her autonomy was limited by other instructions in the handbook which she did regard as authoritative, in this case, to select books only from the approved list. This is consistent with the argument in Chapter 6 that individual agency is never absolute but is always constrained in some degree by societal, institutional and situational factors.

It could be argued that Ms. Bright's interpretation of the handbook's instructions as being either optional or mandatory may have been idiosyncratic. If so, then the authority of a text cannot reside solely within the text itself but also in the reader's interpretation of it. This is likely to be influenced by the circumstances in which it is read and by its accompanying discourses. This accords with the argument in Chapter 4 that meanings, which are always malleable, can be interpreted from a combination of four factors: the speaker, the hearer, the text and the intertext.

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In order to assess the pupils' understanding of the reading books, Ms. Bright used a variety of pedagogical skills such as question and answer techniques, providing clues, summarising and reformulations. Her techniques were similar to those described by Edwards and Mercer (1994, p.199) and Young (1992, p.111) in that they were used to control the discourse to an agenda which was set by herself. Her interventions when the pupil's discourse failed to meet her criteria of an appropriate intertext supported the findings of Harris and Trezise (1997, p.37), in that she regarded it as either incorrect or inappropriate.

The selection, use and understanding of the various discourses depended upon both Ms. Bright and the pupils combining their linguistic and background knowledge, as discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Whilst cohesive devices are an essential aspect of meaningful discourse, the analysis of Transcript 22.1 indicated that they needed to be integrated with the hearer's perception of coherence and shared background knowledge if mutual comprehension was to be achieved. These findings were consistent with Farghal's (1992, pp. 2-3) argument that too many cohesive devices may decrease a reader's comprehension. The analysis following Transcripts 20.3, 20.4 and 20.7 supported the argument in Chapter 9 that misunderstandings may occur if speakers and hearers use different discourses to interpret utterances.

The second subsidiary question asked: "How do these discourses interact?". Bakhtin's (1981, p.291) theoretical views concerning the dialogic nature of discourse received considerable empirical support as the discourses overlapped, intermingled and permeated each other. There was no single 'voice' which subjugated all the others although the instructions and procedures advocated in the handbooks appeared dominant at certain times. These might be considered as a centripetal force in that they tended to set an agenda for the other discourses. They were, to a certain extent, opposed by centrifugal forces in a genre which in some respects resembled that of a

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conversation between Ms. Bright and the pupils as it included their home experiences, interests and feelings. Whilst these discourses never reached Young's (1992, p.100) stage of shared enquiry, the pupils were made to feel that their opinions and ideas were valuable, within the limits of what Ms. Bright considered to be an appropriate intertext.

Foucault's (1990, pp.100-101) belief that the inherent ambivalence of texts may lead to unexpected consequences was evidenced in Ms. Bright's interpretation of grading criteria which prompted her to reallocate grades, a decision which was reversed after she had experienced another powerful discourse (that of the moderator). This supports the findings of studies such as Sapsed (1991, p.8) and Kadir (1992, p.7) who reported that teachers found it difficult to interpret the SAT guidelines concerning the allocation of grades.

The third subsidiary question asked: "What influences do these discourses have upon the pupils?". Fairclough (1989, p.135) believes that the traditional question-and-answer sequences maintain ideologies of social hierarchies and that such routines both set and restrict agendas (*ibid.*, p.138). The findings of this study lend qualified support to this view for Ms. Bright endeavoured to shape and steer the pupil's discourse into the direction she thought appropriate. Her interpretation of the reading book was the dominant one and 'correct' answers had to correspond with this version. Volosinov's (1986, p.95) and Lemke's (1995, pp.13-14) arguments concerning the material aspects of discourse were also supported as the grade Ms. Bright awarded to each pupil was reported to their parents and became part of their official school record.

Although the SATs discourse did establish pupils in a subordinate position in some respects, such as Ms. Bright being the arbiter of relevant knowledge and acceptable answers, it also enabled the children to express their own views and link the reading books to events beyond school. This is consistent with Mills' (1997, p.88) argument that power is not simply imposed upon

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people but that they manage to negotiate some autonomy for themselves in the process.

It was argued in Chapter 18 that Ms. Bright transformed the authoritative discourse of the handbook into a comprehensible, friendly discourse for the pupils. She also made considerable efforts to participate enthusiastically and allowed the children to offer their own opinions and experiences, albeit within the limitations of what she considered to be relevant. With the possible exception of Nigel, the combination of the main discourses made the reading SAT a non-threatening and an apparently quite enjoyable experience for most pupils. This would be consistent with Fairclough's claim that "ideology is truly effective only when it is disguised" (1989, p.107). The SAT procedures were placing six- and seven-year-old children into hierarchical categories on the basis of an assumed ability.

Macbeth (1991, p. 309) states that one of the reasons he carried out his research in secondary schools was "a preference to work with a presumption of the *[language]* competence of persons in the room" as "by high school, the mastery of natural language is achieved". Although this study was carried out on Year 2 pupils, it has been argued that their knowledge of conversational techniques was highly sophisticated and that they were able to use intertextual links effectively. Examples of their ability to understand the implicit conventions of the Initiation-Response-Feedback genre were indicated in the discussions following Transcripts 18.3, 18.5 and 20.2. Whilst in some cases their inferences may have been different from those of older children or adults, such as Alan's interpretation of some illustrations (Transcripts 20.4 and 20.7), they were usually sufficient to maintain a mutually comprehensible pupil-teacher interaction.

The fourth subsidiary question asked: "What contextual features are likely to affect these discourses?" The implementation of the SATs was consistent from year to year as Figure 22.1 and Table 22.1 indicate. The physical context was similar for all of the pupils in that they stood by Ms. Bright

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whilst they read the book. Some of the reading books remained unchanged over the three years and when replacements were made to the approved lists, the new books were intended to be of a similar level of interest and difficulty to those which were being replaced (QCA, 1998, p.10). There was no evidence of any substantial change in Ms. Bright's interpretation of the stories, her pedagogical techniques or her background and linguistic knowledge. The only major variable which appeared to change between each SAT was the difference in pupils and as Ms. Bright adapted her responses to those of the pupil, her methods of implementing the SAT remained similar. The handbook was the same for all the children in a year cohort and showed little variation between the three editions. Nevertheless, what appeared to be a relatively minor change to the examples in the 1998 edition resulted in Ms. Bright changing her grading criteria. Although this was subsequently reversed, it indicates that even small contextual changes may have unexpected and significant effects.

The fifth subsidiary question asked: "What aspects of these discourses have changed and what have remained constant over the period of the study?" Evidence that Ms. Bright's discourses remained relatively stable over the three years of this study is derived from her SATs 'script' (Chapter 22) which demonstrates a noticeable constancy and the variations do not appear to be related to specific years. As the contextual features had changed very little during this time, it seems likely that these were the major factors underlying the enduring characteristics of Ms. Bright's discourse. This is not to argue that there was a straightforward cause and effect mechanism whereby contextual changes automatically caused changes in her discourse patterns. The dialogic nature of discourse means that all 'voices' are in competition and the outcome of this struggle is likely to be both uncertain and temporary. Yet when the main intertexts remain relatively stable this may result in a state of precarious equilibrium. The longitudinal aspects of this study suggested that Ms. Bright's discourse during the SATs was not a result

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of ephemeral influences but remained relatively constant and this may have been due to the *stability of her main intertextual resources*.

The sixth subsidiary question asked: “What are the implications of these discourses for professional practice and policy in education?”

The identification of the five main discourses was a result of subjecting empirical data to the theoretical constructs derived from Section B and so comprises the interaction of practice and theory. For most teachers, practice and theory are so interdependent that attempts to treat them as dichotomous elements would not provide a satisfactory account of what actually takes place in classrooms (Atkinson, 2000, p.9). Usher (1996, p.134) points out that “theory is a practice and practice incorporates theory”.

Atkinson (2000, p.8) maintains that educational theories may contribute more to professional practice than research into “what works” as theories form part of teachers’ background knowledge. These theories are used intuitively and may have a more pervasive and enduring influence than models which purport to provide straightforward recipes for ‘improvement’. This is the rationale for the enlightenment model which was discussed in Chapter 14. Therefore, this project aims to contribute general perspectives (such as examples of the ways in which intertextuality can be used to reflect upon classroom discourses) and empirical findings, both of which have relevance for professional practice and policy in education.

This research can encourage practitioners to think about the type of discourses they employ and the nature of the intertexts they draw upon. If teachers become more aware of the discourses they habitually use when interacting with pupils, this may enable them to counteract unintentional biases. The study has also emphasized that utterances can be construed in different ways which are dependent upon the particular intertexts being used by the interlocutors. This may act as a caveat against practitioners or

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policymakers assuming that their discourses will be interpreted unambiguously by the hearers or readers.

Ms. Bright regarded the text of reading books as authoritative when she was assessing the pupils' responses to comprehension-type questions. This is consistent with the arguments discussed in Chapter 10 that teachers confer a status to these texts which places them above the personal experiences of the children. Her questions often incorporated references to the children's background knowledge and this supported the argument in Part B that in addition to reading skills, cultural knowledge is being assessed in the Key Stage 1 reading SATs.

The Teachers' Handbook (QCA, 1998, p.5) states that "for children learning English as an additional language...the content of the text and the setting of the book should be culturally accessible." Despite this instruction, teachers are only allowed to select from the approved list of 12 books for each level. The extent to which these books are "culturally accessible" for pupils from a variety of different backgrounds, whether English is a first or an additional language, is beyond the scope of the present study but would be a significant topic for future research projects (see following chapter).

The literature discussed in Part B suggested that misunderstandings can occur if teachers and pupils use different intertexts to interpret an utterance and support for this was derived from the analysis of Transcripts 20.3, 20.5 and 22.1. If teachers regard misunderstandings by the pupil as a sign of their inability to provide the required answer, this could prove to be a handicap for children whose cultural knowledge differs from that which is typically valued in schools (see Chapters 5, 6 and 10).

It was argued in Section B that reading is a social practice rather than a set of decontextualised skills and that there are many definitions of 'reading ability'. The criteria for awarding the SAT grades appear to emphasize the score on the running record section. However, this disadvantages children



## **CHAPTER 23: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE INITIAL QUESTIONS AND THE LITERATURE**

such as George and John who showed interest and enthusiasm for the book and answered the questions well but read too many words incorrectly to be awarded a higher grade. Nigel also was assessed as having a satisfactory understanding of the story but failed to decode sufficient words correctly to achieve a Level 2 grade.

The SAT results may be portrayed as representing the global concept of 'reading', whereas they are based on only a small set of skills. If children feel that they have 'failed' on the test in comparison to their peers then this might have a long-term detrimental effect upon their enjoyment of books and enthusiasm for reading. If this is a consequence of formally testing six- and seven-year-old children, then this issue has serious implications for practitioners and policymakers.

### Chapter 24 CONCLUSIONS

This study has investigated the intertextual resources of one teacher during a series of reading SATs but it is possible to make ‘fuzzy generalizations’ even from a single case, as was argued in Chapter 14. Details derived from the transcripts, analysis and findings can enable practitioners to compare aspects of their own situations with those of Ms. Bright. Such comparisons may stimulate further reflection and research into what I believe is a fascinating area of study and of considerable importance to the education of young children.

An analysis of the Reading Assessment Records and transcripts of the SATs and interviews indicated that the pupils’ score on the running record passage determined their grade, irrespective of their enjoyment and their ability to answer questions about the book. Whilst it is possible that Ms. Bright’s interpretation of the handbook’s criteria for grading was idiosyncratic, she believed that she was carrying out the authors’ intentions. This belief was supported by the discourse of the LEA moderator, whom she regarded as an authority on such matters. The handbook (QCA, 1998, p.18) states that each component of the SAT should be taken into consideration “in a balanced way” when allocating grades and teachers should avoid using a single element as a “hurdle”. Yet elsewhere (ibid., p.19), it advises that the running record passage must be “accurate” for grade 2A; “almost entirely accurate” for grade 2B; and the child must be able to read more than 90% of the passage independently and accurately for grade 2C.

## CHAPTER 24: CONCLUSIONS

The first fuzzy generalization is that a teacher may feel that the score on the running record is the most important factor in awarding grades in the Key Stage 1 reading SATs.

*Ms. Bright was required to provide evidence of how she had administered the SATs to an external moderator who had the authority to declare the results invalid if he considered that they had not been carried out in the prescribed manner. In almost all aspects of the SATs she endeavoured to adhere to what she felt were the intentions of the authors. Yet she had difficulty in deciding what some of the handbook's instructions required her to do, as these appeared to conflict with other instructions. In some cases, such as allowing Nigel to re-take a SAT and including the whole of the reading book in her assessment, she either made up her own rules or chose between what she regarded as contradictory instructions.*

The second fuzzy generalization is that a teacher may have difficulty in interpreting some of the instructions in the reading SATs handbook.

Throughout the SATs Ms. Bright was quick to intervene if she felt that the pupils were producing what she believed were inappropriate or irrelevant intertexts and these were often curtailed before the children were allowed to make their point. Whilst Ms. Bright allowed children longer to consider their responses than is usual in a whole class situation, these responses had to be consistent with her interpretation of the reading book. This may have given the impression that she knew the unique, indisputable interpretation of the text.

The third fuzzy generalization is that a teacher could limit a pupil's ability to offer creative interpretations of a text by implying that there is a single, 'correct' version.

Ms. Bright used the reading books as if they were capable of providing definitive answers to comprehension-type questions. The texts were

considered to be a more reliable source of 'correct' answers than discourses based on the children's personal knowledge and experience. It was argued that a possible reason for pupils failing to understand the story may have been conflict between their personal experience and the authority conferred upon the text through Ms. Bright's interpretation of it.

The fourth fuzzy generalization is that, in some cases, young children's failure to understand the text of a reading book may be due to difficulty in yielding the discourse of personal experience to that of textual authority.

These fuzzy generalizations were derived from a case study project. As with all case studies, whilst it is capable of providing rich details and explanations for a single situation, it cannot make reliable generalizations to other situations. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate whether other teachers carry out the Key Stage 1 reading SATs in a similar manner to Ms. Bright.

It is also necessary to discover whether their main intertextual resources are comparable to Ms. Bright's. If they differ, is this due to the teachers using alternative intertexts? Or would other researchers have used other methods of categorisation than the ones I employed? Would different conclusions be a result of variations in data, variations in analysis, or both?

Further research questions which use intertextuality as an analytic tool include:

- (1) What are the main discourses used by pupils in the KS1 reading SATs?
- (2) To what extent do teachers regard the instructions for the KS1 reading SATs as being advisory rather than mandatory?
- (3) To what extent could the questions used in KS1 reading SATs be described as a test of cultural knowledge?
- (4) What intertexts are pupils using when they give 'incorrect' responses to questions about their reading books?

- (5) Do the KS1 reading SATs have any effect upon children's enthusiasm for reading and enjoyment of books?
- (6) To what extent do children experience a conflict between their own experiences and the authority conferred on written texts by teachers?

When I commenced this project, I had considerable misgivings about using intertextuality as my main analytic tool. I was reasonably confident that it would provide data of a sufficient quality but I wondered if the amount generated would be too large for a single study. As there is no limit to the number or variety of intertextual links, deciding on how many to include in a project is a highly subjective procedure. It is tempting to cover a smaller, more discrete topic for a dissertation as this facilitates not only the collection and analysis of data but also the breadth of the literature review.

However, these problems are present to a varying extent in every project and all researchers need to map out some tentative parameters for their study before they commence. The ubiquitous nature of intertextuality makes it a suitable research tool for a wide variety of topics and I hope that it will receive more widespread use in educational research. I believe that the potential depth and quality of the analyses compensate for the inevitably intricate and unfinalized nature of intertextuality.

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# **APPENDIX:PROCEDURES FOR THE KEY STAGE 1 READING TASK**

## **PART G: APPENDIX**

### **Procedures for the Key Stage 1 reading task**

- 1) Pupil is asked to choose a book from a selection on the teacher's desk.
- 2) Pupil reads the first few pages with the teacher.
- 3) Pupil is asked to continue reading on the 100 word running record by her/himself whilst teacher makes notes concerning such features as mistakes, fluency and expression.
- 4) Pupil and teacher finish the book by reading it together. According to the QCA (1998, p.17), this is an optional element and does not form part of the assessment, although the teacher in this study invariably finished the book with the child and used it as part of her assessment.
- 5) The teacher asks the pupil questions about the book throughout the SAT.
- 6) The teacher fills in the Reading Assessment Record with comments and Level/Grade achieved, i.e. 2A, 2B, 2C or 1.
- 7) Children judged to be at Level 1, procedure as above, but with easier reading books and without the running record section.
- 8) Children judged to be at Level 3 take the written reading comprehension test instead of the reading task. They take the task only if they fail to achieve Level 3 on the test.

# APPENDIX: AN EXAMPLE OF A READING ASSESSMENT RECORD

## of Key Stage 1 assessment, 1997

og Assessment Record for Level 1 and Level 2  
SAMANTHA (PSEUDONYM ~~DE~~)

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <del>Sam</del> <del>cut up</del> Gemma | Date 14. 4-97.                        |
|  | Level/Grade achieved 2 <del>B</del> A |

ord sheet is provided to help you note evidence of achievement in the reading task. A number of ideas are offered  
or the recording of your observations during the assessment. You may make other observations which are  
important. There is no need to attempt to record an observation for each of these ideas. Your notes will reflect  
nce you observe in each case.

ng with accuracy, fluency and sense of meaning

|  |  |
|--|--|
| of words   | Recall all words accurately. This just<br>part of book.  |
| ading strategies:<br>raphic; syntactic;<br>al                  | Sounded at mid-night after his<br>attempts. Self corrected tack & look -<br>realised it <del>didn't</del> didn't make sense. |
| ndependence; accuracy;<br>ense of meaning;<br>s of punctuation | Hesitant in parts & paused - but some<br>expression & used punctuation.  |

ending and response

|   |   |
|---|---|
| re about how the book<br>ork  | Knew where to find author's name & read it.   |
| nd involvement  | Talked about her baby brother & how he<br>knew food about etc.  |
| prediction  | Abie to predict Gemma would eat in<br>he end & would try to eat the fruit<br>on lady's hat, as she looked thoughtful<br>books before reading. Understood story &<br>events in the story |
| omments on:<br>as a whole; main ideas;<br>s; characters;<br>new information; way<br>written |   |
| response to book  | Enjoyed book & able to offer ideas<br>of her own & incidents from own life.   |

Table A.1: Scores on running record section and grades for all pupils

| 1997     |        |       |
|----------|--------|-------|
| PUPIL    | ERRORS | GRADE |
| Andrew   | 6      | 2C    |
| Brian    | 1      | 2B    |
| Carol    | 7      | 2C    |
| Clive    | 6      | 2C    |
| Derek    | 0      | 2B    |
| Estelle  | 1      | 2A    |
| Eric     | 5      | 2B    |
| Errol    | 1      | 2A    |
| Jack     | 1      | 2A    |
| John     | 7      | 2C    |
| Joseph   | 0      | 2A    |
| Nigel    | 13     | 1     |
| Richard  | 0      | 2A    |
| Rose     | 0      | 2A    |
| Samantha | 0      | 2A    |
| Sameer   | 0      | 2A    |
| Shirley  | 3      | 2B    |
| Yasmin   | 4      | 2B    |

| 1998     |         |       |
|----------|---------|-------|
| PUPIL    | ERRORS  | GRADE |
| Alice    | 3       | 2B    |
| Anne     | 3       | 2B    |
| Arnold   | 4       | 2B    |
| Erica    | 2       | 2B    |
| Flora    | 3       | 2B    |
| George   | 8       | 2C    |
| Jason    | 9       | 2C    |
| Joel     | Level 1 | 1     |
| Karen    | 5       | 2B    |
| Louise   | 1       | 2A    |
| Manisha  | 0       | 2A    |
| Marcus   | 8       | 2C    |
| Monica   | 2       | 2B    |
| Natalie  | 1       | 2A    |
| Nicholas | 2       | 2B    |
| Paresh   | 5       | 2B    |
| Raj      | 0       | 2A    |
| Ruby     | 2       | 2B    |
| Shefali  | 1       | 2A    |
| Simon    | 2       | 2B    |
| Sonia    | 3       | 2B    |
| Terry    | 4       | 2B    |
| Wesley   | Level 1 | 1     |

| 1999    |         |       |
|---------|---------|-------|
| PUPIL   | ERRORS  | GRADE |
| Adele   | 0       | 2A    |
| Alan    | 4       | 2B    |
| Chloe   | 5       | 2B    |
| Denis   | 3       | 2B    |
| Elisa   | 8       | 2C    |
| Emilia  | 3       | 2B    |
| Esther  | 3       | 2B    |
| Howard  | 0       | 2A    |
| Lisa    | 0       | 2A    |
| Maria   | Level 1 | 1     |
| Olwen   | 8       | 2C    |
| Philip  | 0       | 2A    |
| Roy     | 3       | 2B    |
| Shobna  | Level 1 | 1     |
| Trevor  | 0       | 2A    |
| Valerie | 1       | 2A    |